

Ilya  
Bolotowsky







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## Acknowledgements

Ilya Bolotowsky had his first New York one-man show in 1930 and has exhibited here regularly since the early 1950's. Not before this current assessment of Bolotowsky's oeuvre has he been presented alone in a New York museum show. His steadfast adherence to stylistic ideals that were often out of fashion and overshadowed by other trends is at least in part responsible for such delayed acceptance.

Bolotowsky was already painting abstract murals in the 1930's when social realism dominated the scene. In the 1940's, as a member of the American Abstract Artists, he had already embraced Mondrian's Neo-Plastic ideals and never swerved in his commitment to this rational alternative to movements based upon a release of subconscious imagery.

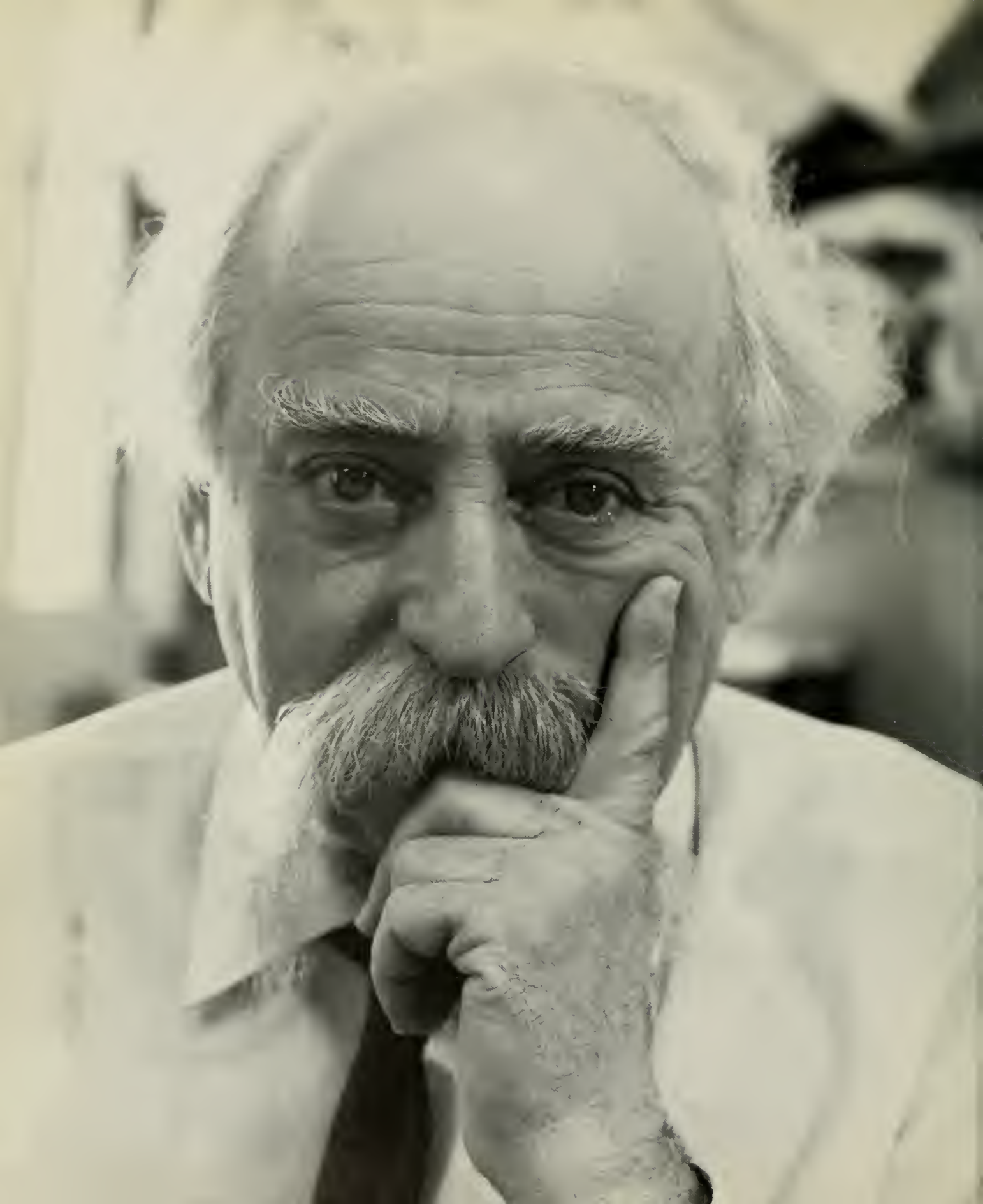
Subsequently a widespread preoccupation with Abstract Expressionism of the 1950's and the rather single-minded pursuit of the idioms that grew out of it, left Bolotowsky in an isolated position which he used sagely to enrich and deepen his increasingly personal expression.

A decision to prepare this exhibition was made years ago upon suggestion of Mrs. Adelyn Breeskin, Consultant, 20th Century Painting and Sculpture, at the National Collection of Fine Arts in Washington, D.C. It is, therefore, fitting that the National Collection and the Guggenheim Museum should share the exhibition, and that Mrs. Adelyn Breeskin should have contributed the following catalogue essay. Mrs. Breeskin and Dr. Louise Averill Svendsen, Curator of The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, therefore, share credits for the undertaking as a whole, since the latter, with the help of Mimi Poser, interviewed the artist, eliciting, for the purpose of this publication, important and original information. Dr. Svendsen is also responsible for the selection,

and with the aid of Carol Fuerstein, Cheryl McClenney and Nancy Troy, for the preparation of the catalogue. Despite such efforts, the Bolotowsky exhibition would not have been presented in this form without the devoted help of Grace Borgenicht, the artist's friend and dealer throughout the past two decades, the generous tolerance of lenders whose names are specially acknowledged, and above all, Ilya Bolotowsky's own passionate involvement which through his urgent presence enlivened and rendered meaningful our institutional efforts.

The Guggenheim Museum takes pride in presenting, through a carefully weighed selection, Ilya Bolotowsky's significant contribution to American art.

Thomas M. Messer  
*Director,*  
The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum



## Ilya Bolotowsky

As artists grow older their styles become ever more their own, drawing less upon changes that go on around them. This indeed has been true of the work of Ilya Bolotowsky. He came to the United States from Russia at the age of sixteen in 1923, and some ten years later first saw paintings by Mondrian in the Gallatin Collection in New York. Greatly impressed by them, he began to explore the clean, pure, formal approach perfected by Piet Mondrian in pursuit of his Neo-Plasticism. He has never ceased to be fascinated by this elusive perfection and has retained throughout his career much of the basic imagery of that master. Order and clarity have been essential to both artists, as well as a severe discipline of restraint and subtlety in the ordering of their insistently vertical-horizontal compositions. It has been said that the rampant disorder of modern life in our cities was a constant challenge to Mondrian, encouraging him to confine himself to a strictly formal art devoid of figurative images. This rampant disorder—which is no less evident today—may also have drawn Bolotowsky to Mondrian's Neo-Plasticism—a kind of painting in which a great range of tensions exist, but find resolution in a world of pure abstraction.

Loyalty to an already stated goal or idea does not mean imitation or subservience. A true artist, through his concentration and personal depth of feeling, must re-examine the goal in his own terms to reach artistic maturity and independence. Bolotowsky's career is a lesson in the realization and refinement of a highly personal taste.

Sir Herbert Read defined pure color as color used for itself, not for imitation. Pure color in this sense, in ever richer varieties and shapes, has added new strength to Bolotowsky's highly distinctive canvases in recent years. Robert M. Ellis remarked in his essay for the Bolotowsky exhibition held at the University of New Mexico in 1970, that the artist's more recent paintings with their jewel-like quality of color bring to mind the icons of Bolotowsky's native Russia. One might indeed speculate on the differences between the impact of Bolotowsky's Russian heritage and the Dutch background of Mondrian. The richly ornamental robes of the flat, elongated figures of saints in Russian icons make a thought-provoking comparison with Bolotowsky's compositions. The icons do have a singular, majestic beauty and underlying vitality that Bolotowsky seems to have inherited. And in addition to their wealth of color, there is also a boldness of conception that might be likened, in its way, to Bolotowsky's willingness to experiment with the shape of the canvas.



In 1947 he began to use the diamond-shaped format. In explaining his liking for this form, he has said that the feeling of space is much greater in a diamond-shaped area than in a square of the same lateral measurement because the vertical and horizontal dimensions are larger in relationship to the whole. He has also recently employed the tondo shape with great success, as well as the ellipse, the rectangle and other related forms, using colors rich in quality and an interplay of horizontal and vertical tensions always brilliantly alive.

Since Neo-Plasticism is basically an architectural or architectonic form of painting, Bolotowsky's move in 1961 into the creation of three-dimensional structures or columns was a natural development and has greatly enhanced his work. Each side of a structure presents a self-contained unit, yet when any two adjacent sides are seen together a new composition embracing them both is formed. Viewed successively in this way the columns present a whole series of compositions within a unified whole.

In the later 1940's, Kandinsky's "inner necessity" rather than Mondrian's "balanced relations" seems to have become the dominant influence throughout our country. Abstract Expressionism flourished with its action painting, impulsive gesture and formal permissiveness. It continued to attract a majority of our artists into the 1960's. As a confirmed follower of Mondrian, Bolotowsky was never swayed by such spontaneous expression. He adhered unremittently to an art of equilibrium established through the proportion of decisive plastic means—the planes, the lines, the colors. The Neo-Plastic idea persisted in his work, continuing to develop and to show vigor. Although related to geometric art, it is not properly geometric as in the work of Gabo or Pevsner. While geometric art explores the potentiality offered by many geometric figures, Neo-Plasticism limits itself to the use of the right angle. This, Bolotowsky says, offers the possibility of much subtler relationships. "Nowadays," he has said, "when paintings torture the retina, when music gradually destroys the eardrum, there must, all the more, be a need for an art that searches for new ways to achieve harmony and equilibrium, for an art where, as Mondrian said: 'inwardness is brought to its clearest definition, or externality is interiorized to the highest degree'; for an art that strives for the timelessness of the Platonic ideas. To this art I hope to continue making my contribution." ("On Neo-plasticism and My Own Work: A Memoir,"

*Leonardo* 2:230, 1969.) He has indeed established a powerful individual image towards this end, and has had a marked impact on the formal art of recent years. Balancing color and line in forms that are deceptively simple, beautifully colorful, and handsomely functional, he has created an art that perpetuates the refinement and transcendent vitality of the highest formal ideal.

Adelyn D. Breeskin  
*Consultant,*  
20th Century Painting and Sculpture  
National Collection of Fine Arts

## Interview with Ilya Bolotowsky

by Louise Averill Svendsen  
with Mimi Poser

**LAS** There are some things, I think, Ilya, we'd like to know about your life. You were born in Petrograd in 1907 and your father, you've told me, was a lawyer.

**IB** My father, at that time, was still studying law at the university in Petrograd which is now called Lenin-grad. My mother was already through her university, the only university for women in Russia.

**LAS** You were brought up, then, in an unusually educated, cultivated household. How were you educated yourself? Did you go to the public schools in Petrograd?

**IB** No, no, I did not go to school as such. I had private tutors and I would just take tests. I had more than half the year off at the Gymnasia in Baku, when I did my reading, which proved to be pretty useful.

**LAS** Did you study English then?

**IB** No, there was no English. I studied some English when I went to the French college in Constantinople.

**LAS** Tell me, during this period, were you taking art lessons or were you drawing?

**IB** My mother, who did art all her life on her own, finally did take some lessons during the First World War when a great many artists fled from

Moscow and Petrograd to Baku. Suddenly Baku blossomed out into a rather big cultural center. There was an art school called The Art Studio which wasn't bad at all. There were some realists teaching there—and one fellow, very academic, and another one, Gerasimov, who was an Expressionist in a style similar to Jawlensky, a very good one. But my mother had her own sort of club for children of her professional friends and she let us draw, and that was the beginning.

**LAS** Do you remember meeting some of these artists?

**IB** I met some of them and on a few occasions I would work in The Art Studio, and they were quite amused that I could draw . . . it came to me naturally.

**LAS** You can't remember any time that you weren't drawing?

**IB** No, I drew on and off for quite a while. By the age of five I could draw from nature—portraits of people, animals and landscapes that were not bad.

**LAS** When did you conceive the idea that you might like to become a professional artist?

**IB** I did not really consider this. Because of the Russian or Tolstoian influence,



it was felt that you had to do something socially useful. So it was understood that I would be a lawyer.

LAS When your father settled in Constantinople, did he intend to stay there? Or was it just a place from which to come to America?

IB Oh, he intended to come to America, yes. He intended to come to America, but for a while, he was partners with some fellow. They had a trading corporation and then when they made enough money, we went to America.

MP How long did you stay in Constantinople?

IB We stayed there only about two and a half years.

LAS You went to school there?

IB I went to the *Collège St. Joseph* for two years, yes.

LAS Did you study art?

IB They had an art class which I thought was preposterous because the teacher could not draw. He made us do geometric shapes free hand and model them in what Malevich called passages from light to dark, very, very precise. And the kids could not even handle the pencils. So I could do freehand circles and other shapes. And it's funny that years later I became a geometric painter. Maybe this affected me more than I realize.

MP Did you know about Malevich then? Were you aware of what was going on in the art world?

IB Malevich, no. I discovered Malevich when I got to New York. No. Russian modern art I knew mostly as Chagall or Gerasimov, who painted somewhat like the German Expressionists.

MP But you were aware of what was going on in the art world as a child. You were interested in it?

IB Yes, but for me, art at that time, as a child, was representational art of a more liberal kind. Not polished, but like the German painter Max Lieberman, the Russians Repin, Serov, Levitan, and, the pre-Surrealist, Vrubel, and, of course, Chagall.

MP Did your mother take you to museums, or did you want to go yourself?

IB Baku really had no museum to speak of except for The Art Studio that was established during the war, and held occasional exhibitions.

LAS How about in Constantinople? Did you go around and visit all of the churches?

IB In Constantinople, the churches, yes, Hagia Sophia and the mosques, and the museum.

LAS Were you happy at the idea of coming to America?

IB Yes, but again it was rather a shock because, culturally, America was very different from Europe. Not anymore, maybe. In New York it was rather

rough and aggressive and to me this, at first, seemed rather hectic. And then, once I got adjusted, I was okay.

MP What year was it that you came here?

IB It was September 1923.

LAS How did you decide what to do when you got here? Did you go to school or were you beyond the stage of high school?

IB I went to the National Academy of Design.

LAS Why did you decide to do that?

IB It was the only art school that didn't charge tuition, or rather, it charged a nominal one.

LAS But you had decided then to become an artist?

IB Well, I sort of decided. Since I was always doing it, it just grew rather naturally I suppose. It wasn't even a matter of choice, it just grew.

MP And your parents had no objection?

IB No, not really, although I suspect my father, in a sense, even though he wouldn't force me, would rather have had me become a lawyer. On the other hand, he never would insist on it, but he felt I shouldn't make a final decision until I knew that I had enough talent to rise above mediocrity.

LAS Were you happy at the National Academy?

IB No. It was a very stodgy school, but we had models there, although the school was poor and the classes were crowded.

LAS Did you study with anyone in particular?

IB There wasn't any real instruction as I would consider it. In this case, I sound like Raphael, who wrote that "because I could not get any intelligent instruction, I had to follow the classic Greek masters."

LAS You must have been very good, though, because you got first prize for drawing and painting when you were there.

IB They were rather flexible with me. You had to take one year of drawing from the antique plaster casts. But after, I think, a month of this, they advanced me from one antique to the next, and then, after a couple of months, I was through and I went into the life class. So I guess they were pretty nice with me, the Academicians.

LAS You didn't learn any particular system at the Academy?

IB At the Academy, it was direct painting but actually not a system.

LAS What kind of painting did you do, what would you call it now? Would it have been Impressionism at that time?

IB Well, no. It was a kind of Academic Impressionism. In other words, I was

trying to work in color areas to the best of my ability but because color was known to be something rather evil, I was subdued in my colors. And even so, I was known to be too daring. Color was known to be not a very solid way of working in a culture where a gentleman would use very subdued silvery and brown tones.

**LAS** What sort of subject matter were you encouraged to do?

**IB** It was mostly models, just models.

**LAS** Did you do landscapes, too?

**IB** We had no chance of doing landscapes there. I painted some landscapes sometimes in the summer, when I had a Tiffany Foundation Scholarship.

**LAS** Did you get a degree out of the Academy? Or did you leave before such a thing happened?

**IB** The Academy awarded no diplomas and no degrees. I never had much use for degrees, and never did anything about getting one.

**LAS** But at some point, you finished it and started off on your own?

**IB** Yes.

**MP** What did you do after the National Academy?

**IB** Oh, let's see. I got a job doing textile design. For a while I taught in settlement houses and then finally, after saving some money and getting a

small scholarship, I went to Europe for ten months in 1932. When I got back, I did textile designing again, then a P.W.A.P. Project, then the W.P.A. Project.

**LAS** How would you describe your work before you went to Europe? What sort of things were you painting, Expressionist? Naturalist?

**IB** Before I went to Europe, I considered my work Impressionistic although my color was still inhibited by the National Academy. Despite the fact that up there I was a rebel, I didn't dare to clash certain colors as Impressionists would. I avoided color vibrations because they were in "bad taste" and yet this is the whole effect of the Impressionists—they would create luminosity through small brushstrokes of vibrating colors. Anyhow, my work was not sufficiently Impressionistic in color but it was an attempt at least. In Europe I became rather more of an Expressionist. As a matter of fact, it was not so much the influence of the Germans, but more the influence of Soutine by way of a certain black artist who was at that time living in Denmark. His name was William Henry Johnson and he had been a remarkably gifted student in the National Academy in New York, and a fantastic colorist.

MP This was in the early thirties, wasn't it?

IB Yes. It was in 1932.

MP When you were in Paris did you meet any of the people who were working in the geometric style, the *Cercle et Carré* group?

IB No.

LAS What artists impressed you when you were in Paris and wandering around Europe?

IB I was interested in Cubism, Picasso impressed me, and Braque. And I was also interested somewhat in De Chirico, although it's a funny thing. I felt that De Chirico was a bit corny. Later on I liked him more. Now I'm going back to the original opinion. Cézanne I liked very much, and van Gogh very much too. And also Matisse. As to the geometric painters, at that time, in the early thirties, I don't think they were exhibited much. However, there was one show of modern Russian art around 1930 in New York, and that included the Suprematists, the Cubists and the Constructivists. Also in 1933, I saw my first Mondrians in the Gallatin Collection in New York, but in Paris, if you didn't know where to go, . . . you didn't see them.

MP One other thing about those Paris times. You mentioned De Chirico, and at that time there was a lot of Surrealist work being done there.

IB Yes.

MP Did you meet many of the surrealists?

IB No, no. You see, I was in Paris only a few weeks. I was on a strict budget. I went to the Louvre and I went to see the Picassos, the Cubists. I spent a lot of time in Italy, some in Germany, Denmark, and England.

LAS So when you came back from a year of traveling around, the economic situation in America was steadily deteriorating. Can you tell us a little bit about the times then, economic problems you artists had and how you happened first to get on to the Project? And was it the mural project, first and only, that you were on, or were you involved with other projects during this period?

IB Oh no. The thing was complicated . . . as younger Americans we had no hope economically at all, there were few galleries in New York, there were few jobs. The critics were mostly against us. So that my job with the textile designing thing was fairly good by the standards of the time. But it took a certain amount of dedication, or maybe fatalism to continue painting. The first thing I did get when I came back from Europe, after the textile company failed, was a P.W.A.P., Public Works Administration Art Project job, not W.P.A. I did a number of easel paintings. The salary for P.W.A.P. for the period was fantastic, \$38.25 a week. I was required to paint realistic easel paintings of New York scenes. I did one from a window in the Woolworth Building, another one was of a barber shop, a third of some steel workshop.

**LAS** Did they give you a special time limit before you had to turn in a painting?

**IB** I think a painting would be allowed about five weeks to complete. Then I applied for a W.P.A. teaching job at a modest \$22.40, I think. And that was really hard work.

**LAS** How did you get into the W.P.A. mural project?

**IB** I was told by Mrs. Balcomb Greene, Gertrude Greene, that Diller was starting a W.P.A. mural project trying to use abstract artists of the day. I was already trying to do abstractions and I went to see Diller and I was asked to submit sketches. After a lot of trouble because the teachers' project would not let me off, I was finally transferred to the mural project. The first mural design that I did was for the Williamsburg Housing Project. The architect for this project was William Lescaze, one of the few modern architects of the day, and sympathetic to abstract art. This was the beginning of something new. And I don't think people realize that at that time Diller was instrumental in something historical. . . . He played a most important role in the development of abstract art in this country as mural project administrator even giving up his own painting for quite a while. And yet he was painting Neo-Plastic paintings as early as 1934. He was totally dedicated to promoting abstract style in murals before abstract art was accepted in the U.S. He deserves absolute full credit for his work in all the future art history books.

**LAS** Was it because of your involvement in the W.P.A. that during this period, I think it was 1936, that you and your friends were instrumental in founding the American Abstract Artists association?

**IB** It was more or less like this, although not entirely. The reason was very indirect. Harry Holtzman, a student of Hans Hofmann, was Diller's assistant in the W.P.A. mural project. Holtzman had rented a big loft . . . which he painted à la Mondrian, all white. All just right, and he wanted to teach his idea of Neo-Plastic art, and he wanted artists to come and discuss things there, so that the young fellows who would study with him would also have a kind of intellectual atmosphere. And so he invited a whole bunch of us who also were on the mural project and some of the others to meet in his loft. But what happened was this: the bunch came to discuss not Holtzman's ideas but rather how to organize a group and to exhibit. Out of this developed the American Abstract Artists. Actually, the term abstract was not very well defined at this time.

**LAS** You didn't hang labels on yourselves in this period.

**IB** Well, it was just beginning to emerge, I mean the idea of definitions, but it was still very vague. The main distinction was this: there were people who would paint and abstract from nature, and there were those who dared to simply abstract without any nature at all. And between the two groups there was a certain amount of tension. The Hofmann students really belonged, more or less, to those who abstract from nature to some extent.



I never studied with Hofmann, neither did Balcomb Greene. We were people who did not abstract from nature at all. Although I did some Cubist paintings, I felt they were not entirely abstract. And so the American Abstract Artists tried to establish a definition of what is abstract. We could never get a definition to suit everybody and finally gave up the attempt because of the arguments that came out of it.

LAS Did you continue to meet informally?

IB Oh yes. Soon other people joined like George L. K. Morris, even Albert Eugene Gallatin and the American Abstract Artists was formally organized. Also there was an attempt on the part of another bunch, the socially-minded people, some of them might have been, and some, who were not but were just affected by the depression. They felt that art had to serve the people in a more direct way, and that art should derive from nature. Although how that would serve the people, I really don't know. And so, there were several movements within the same abstract group. The socially conscious group was depending mostly on Picasso. There was also a non-social Picasso renaissance. It was an amusing coincidence, because Picasso, in spite of his abstract quality, always had some feeling of nature in his work. There was some empathy, some feeling of inner vitality or some feeling of nature, some quality of the texture of nature that the pure abstractionists would not have. For that matter, Léger also never achieved pure abstraction for long. He painted a few paintings which were geometric and

some which were almost Mondrian-like. But eventually he quit in disgust, and said, "That's for saints and I am a man." He had no use for it.

MP You used the word "empathy" to distinguish between empathy and abstraction. Could you explain that?

IB You can find this in Wilhelm Worringer. Empathy is the essence of any vitality, activity, anything to do with life. Brancusi's bird or fish are extreme examples of empathy. So are works by Titian and Rembrandt. That's empathy, when you feel that the painting is not just copying something from nature but gives you the essence of either its vitality or mystery, or let's say as in a dancer leaping: the essence of movement. On the other hand, a very beautiful bridge, I would say that's pure abstraction. It's not alive. It's just a perfection in structure beyond human bounds. And so that would be pure abstraction. There is a difference. If a bridge is made to look like a deer leaping over a precipice, something would be lost in its purity of design. If Rembrandt gave out a very strong, obvious abstract sense, a great deal of Rembrandt would be lost.

MP Do you find that you and many of your colleagues were reading Worringer in this country?

IB No, no. We had no idea of Worringer. We had to probe on our own. Worringer wrote *Abstraction and Empathy* in 1906. Kandinsky painted his first abstraction around 1910, but Worringer's book appeared in the

- United States, in English, in the 1950s. And so when the group divided among people who were painting without referring to nature, which is abstraction, and those who felt there had to be an essence of nature, empathy, we did not know those terms yet.
- LAS** Now you mentioned Kandinsky. During this period were you and other people here in New York exposed to Kandinsky's paintings at the Museum of Non-Objective Painting?
- IB** Oh yes.
- LAS** Did they make any impression on you as an abstract painter yourself by this time.
- IB** They did, and I was influenced by Kandinsky in the first mural sketch I did which I never submitted. Kandinsky is actually pure empathy. In other words, he is the father of abstraction and yet, like Moses, he never saw the promised land, you know. He never even suspected it. Kandinsky was a mystic and he is emotional and he transmits empathy. Even when he paints geometrically, his paintings are explosions, they're all emotional explosions. His work is mystical, never structured like Mondrian's. So that it's funny that they always mention that Kandinsky is the first pure abstractionist when it isn't quite the case somehow.
- LAS** Not even historically now.
- IB** Not really, no. You might say, if Kandinsky is pure abstraction, then why is not Brancusi? You get into a real mess.
- LAS** Yes, but how did you feel about Kandinsky?
- IB** I always had a kind of funny feeling about Kandinsky. Some of the stuff impressed me, and yet when I tried to learn from him, I would get in a kind of soup, you see. And I had the same feeling with Klee because Klee, of course, is Swiss, and the Swiss have a very particular gift for sort of legendary, delicate, fairy tales.
- MP** It has been said that although Kandinsky worked in France and Germany for much of his career, he retained, particularly in his later work, certain characteristics of Russian art. This has also been said of Malevich. Do you feel that, in spite of the fact that you have lived and worked in the United States for most of your life, your own Russian background is discernable in your painting?
- IB** Certainly as one gets older, one's origins are reasserted. The aging process affects the voice pattern, speech and artistic style as well. In the case of Kandinsky, his Russian background began to show more strongly late in his life: for example, his colors, which always reveal the influence of Byzantine icons, grew even more Russian. This is undoubtedly true in my own case as well.

LAS So actually of all the precedents of the earlier generation, of so-called abstract artists it is the Constructivists, who affected you most?

IB Malevich or Mondrian, that's about all.

LAS It wasn't really until you encountered Mondrian that you began to feel that this is something which means something.

IB That's right. Until then I tried to utilize Cubism in some fashion on my own.

LAS Don't we see the influence of your encounter with Miró, which is very strong in the thirties, and then that of Mondrian?

IB Well, I saw Mirós and Mondrians at about the same time, in 1933, and so at first I was trying to combine the two. I felt the necessity of combining the biomorphic and the geometric.

LAS When you got out of the army and you came back to New York and looked at the scene, then what happened?

IB I was in a rather tired condition. Soon after my return in 1945, A. E. Gallatin invited me to show in a group, "Eight by Eight," eight paintings by eight abstract artists, to be shown in the Philadelphia Museum, to which he had just donated his collection. Then I got ready for a one-man show with J. B. Neumann's New Art Circle in 1946. During my show in the New Art Circle I was invited to meet Albers. Albers had

wanted to go on a long sabbatical leave from Black Mountain College . . . and I was eventually hired to be there in his absence.

LAS What was it like when you arrived at Black Mountain College? You were the acting director for the next two years while he was gone. Who were the teachers down there when you were there?

IB Among the teachers, there were some very good people. There was Max Dehn, the famous mathematician who was eclipsed by Einstein. There was Hansgirg, an Austrian industrialist, a chemist. He was quite a famous scientist who had fled from Austria when it was overrun by the Nazis.

LAS Who was teaching art down there?

IB Albers left and I was teaching art. There was also Mary Gregory, but she taught what they called wood-working.

LAS Did they have a sculptor?

IB They had no sculptor. The weaving, which Annie Albers was teaching, was taken over by Franziska Haas. That was the Art Department, you see.

LAS The main responsibility for teaching painting was yours?

IB Yes. Painting and drawing. Design was not being taught because it was Albers' specialty.



LAS Did you stay down there two full years?

IB I stayed there two years and the summer in between. I conducted a summer program.

LAS Was there an interesting social life?

IB Well, it was interesting at first but it got to be a self-centered and closed community, since on the outside it was the old south, you know. It was different from the present day south. It feels almost a century away.

LAS What sort of students did you have?

IB I had quite a number of good students. Some of them ended up in other professions. Kenneth Noland is probably the best known. His present style has nothing to do with what I taught him. With me, he was actually in a Cubistic period and gradually going into abstraction. And there were quite a few gifted painters who ended up in different styles, such as Joseph Fiore, Knute Stiles, the Bergman brothers, and others. Altogether it was a very lively place, but very much inbred. And that finally became stifling, like living in a small room with mirrors; nothing else exists, except endless reflections. And I feel it wasn't necessarily a very healthy situation. What I'm saying is a terrific heresy because now the interest in Black Mountain College is growing more and more. I guess, again, I'll be considered a dissident, but that's the way it is, much as I hate to talk against the myth. It had many exciting features. Some were disappointing. The Utopian side went the way of Utopias. In the morning

we held classes. In the afternoon there was a work program. Students were digging ditches, laying pipes and so forth. And the faculty, we chipped in and gaily too. Except after a couple of days some of the faculty would goof off and stay away. I at first chipped in you know, with my Tolstoian spirit, very honestly. You know, you want to do your share but if it puts you in a position of a fool, well that's a different story. So that's the way it was.

LAS When you left Black Mountain did you decide to settle in New York?

IB I came back to New York. I stayed at my parents' place for a while. Then I went to teach at the University of Wyoming from 1948 to 1957.

LAS During this long period of almost a decade, you were teaching and also painting?

IB Yes. When I got my sabbatical at the University of Wyoming, I extended it into a two year leave. So actually I was teaching there seven years. And for the two years I was on leave, I taught at Brooklyn College.

LAS Of course, what it really meant was, you got back to New York, into the thick of things, met earlier, old friends again and could arrange your own exhibitions.

IB In Wyoming I had a great deal of time to devote to painting and I started doing movies there too.

LAS You'd never made movies before?

IB Not before I got to Wyoming, no.

MP What kind of movies?

IB Experimental films. *Metanoia* was awarded first prize in 1963 in Chicago. I use actors, I do trick photography and the plot develops out of the visual elements and generally there's some connection with some myth, either a Greek myth, or some myth I adapt to fit my own interpretation, or some myth I make up on my own. *Metanoia* is a myth I made up that had never existed before. It has one protagonist who sometimes looks like Christ the Martyr or the Redeemer and at other times, the Inquisitor. And then you think that he is the Inquisitor, and then you think he's just a poor lost soul in a tremendous, frightening world. The set is an old brewery, seven floors high and all floors partly bashed out. The protagonist has to walk on narrow catwalks at great heights; and then you feel again that he is a triumphal figure. Maybe that's how I feel about humanity and the way it sees itself. If Christ represents a certain idea of humanity, then that's maybe what it is. There he is, to me, a tortured human and there he is a triumphant god-like figure. So this is *Metanoia*, my interpretation of it. It's a myth that never was put together before.

LAS Really, isn't that contradictory to the way you paint?

IB In the films, I don't do abstractions. I feel the movie is purely an art of empathy, not abstraction. Because the camera, after all, is an eye that sees

from nature. It hasn't got the intellect of the human eye and so I feel that a movie has to be visual. And abstraction goes into the conceptual. It's not the same. Who knows, you can do abstractions with a movie camera but I think you may as well paint them. I think you get more if you do.

LAS What other sorts of films have you done?

IB I have tried a few sorts of satirical take-offs on some of Duchamp's work and some documentaries on him and other artists. For example, I did a movie of Duchamp all alone in his studio doing absolutely nothing and he did it very well. I mean it seriously. He occupied space. Sometimes he looked like Sherlock Holmes, sometimes he was Duchamp, sometimes a Dadaist, sometimes a philosopher, Mephistopheles, Faust and everything else. He projected very well. I also have a film of David Smith in color with his wife and first child.

LAS I understand that you did a film of George L. K. Morris in his studio and one of Gabo and films of a variety of other artists. It would really make a fascinating movie to edit them together.

IB Eventually I'll do all this.

LAS Do you think your experiences out west in Wyoming had any effect on your painting? Stylistically, choice of colors . . .

IB I'm not sure. At first I thought all this experience was useful, and I suppose any experience is useful, but directly, I am not so sure.

LAS One thing that's noticeable in the forties, say from after the War until early in the fifties, was your use of a very predominant grid pattern. Why did you do this and how long did it last with you?

IB What you are referring to was a by-product of the influence of Mondrian's last two paintings, except that the result visually is not the same. I had the intention of creating a counterpoint of colors, so that if you separated out each color in one painting of this period and had all the yellows on one canvas, reds on another, blues on another, each one would be a rhythmic design in its own right. And all of them work together like a contrapuntal motif as in Bach, although it's a very approximate comparison. That was my idea—to create a continuous counterpoint.

LAS And you used the grid to separate these?

IB No, there is no actual grid because with a grid all the spaces would be pretty much equal. In these paintings the spaces are different in size.

MP You talked about rhythm and contrapuntal rhythm. Do you feel the way Kandinsky did about music and painting? That there is a direct analogy between the creation of abstract or non-objective art and music?

IB Well, there may be some because, for example, I can talk to people while I am painting, but I cannot have any music played while I am painting because the rhythm in music gets in the way of the rhythm I am painting,

which to me proves that there is something in common. If one gets in the way of the other, it's like playing two bits of music together at the same time. They get in each other's way. Whereas a conversation has a rhythm, but it's a very free rhythm so it's not strong enough to get in the way of a painting.

LAS But you don't have any feeling as Kandinsky sometimes wrote, that yellow meant to him a particular sound, or red meant a certain other sound?

IB For Kandinsky colors were actually sounds. I wouldn't go that far. He had a whole theory and I imagine that eventually psychologists may prove that in some cases he's quite right. It may be psychologically quite true but, it is not as important to me as it was to him. The trouble with Kandinsky to my mind is this: he was a very important artist historically and he was a great painter, but a lot of his work is so full of various visual experiments that they are pretty hard to see. So if you think of them as intuitive scholarly research, they're fine. If you think of them as plastic works, a lot of them are pretty unbearable to me.

LAS Something else I have been particularly interested in—seeing your paintings from the forties especially and right up to the present day—is the way in which you define space. None of them seem to go very far backward into space. How do you define where the space is in relation to the surface and how do you range the colors and the shapes within this definable space?

IB In the early forties I still used diagonals. A diagonal, of course, creates ambivalent depth—diagonal depth might go either back or forth. It's not like perspective which goes only one way. This ambivalence I discovered was antithetical to my style. Although I hated to give up diagonals, I had to give them up finally.

Mondrian gave them up quite early in his career. Although he had used them very well, he had to give them up too. Glarner, on the other hand, rediscovered diagonals and he held on to them. We all solve our own practical problems. I had to give up diagonals because the space going back and forth was becoming too violent. The diagonal space was getting in the way of the tension on the flat surface. You cannot get an absolute flatness in painting because of the interplay of the colors, the way they feel to us. But you can achieve relative flatness, within which the colors and the proportions might push back and forth creating an extra tension. This tense flatness must not destroy the overall flat tension, which, to my mind, in two-dimensional painting is the most important thing. Now of course, in a different style, it's a different story.

LAS When you think of your planes in the kind of composition you are doing now, do you envisage them as going behind the picture plane or in front of the picture plane, or isn't that important?

IB I consider them as being tensions on the canvas, sort of pulling back and forth, but still on the canvas. They are not like planes in Cubism that go in front. They are on the surface, except some pull a bit forward, some pull a bit back, but they never go back and forth, say, as in Albers. When you see Albers long enough, after a while his rectangles begin doing this to you. It becomes almost hypnotic until you shake yourself out of it.

LAS But that is not something that interests you really?

IB No. That's why when people consider me and Albers of the same school, I think it's completely false, because the whole purpose is entirely different. He uses paint and I use paint, he uses hard edges, but it's not the same style at all. He wouldn't want to paint my way and I don't want to use any of his space.

LAS In viewing your overall development, it is clear that the works have become very much larger. Would you have liked to have painted on a large scale in the thirties?

IB It was too expensive to paint big in the thirties. I like doing murals because you can paint big. The biggest one, of course, was in 1940. It was a fifty foot mural. But before then my first mural was eighteen feet across.

**LAS** Most of your canvases were twenty by thirty inches.

**IB** That was a big size for the period. The only way to paint big at that time was to do murals.

**LAS** Another thing that has become quite characteristic of your work since the middle fifties and especially in the last three or four years is that you are working with diamonds and tondos instead of rectangles. How did you become interested in working with these shapes?

**IB** The first one I painted was a triangle. I found a triangular shape that was used by pool players and I stretched a canvas on it. Not a diamond shape, a triangular one, which is an interesting problem because, in general, I feel that a triangle is not a very pleasant shape. Wherever you look you feel you are confined by the angles, which are narrow. But the composition was curious. Then in Wyoming, I was given several wheels as a gift by some ranchers. I removed the spokes and I used a wagon wheel as a stretcher. This painting is included in the Guggenheim exhibition. This again was an interesting problem because straight lines or straight edges within a round format, a circle, or the area which we might call a tondo, are affected by the edges and seem to curve away from the edges. It's like a string which is being plucked away from the edge but, since there are two edges, first one edge pushes it away and then the other. It results in an almost vibrating effect that you do not get in a rectangular

canvas. Of course the main reason that I started on odd shapes was the fact that the old masters used a variety of formats for their paintings and murals.

**LAS** You mean Raphael and his tondos?

**IB** Yes, and the modern avant garde generally stay very obediently within the rectangular format and do not seem to dare to go beyond it.

**LAS** How, in a tondo, do you keep the composition from rolling? That has always been a problem.

**IB** Well, you see, since I use straight lines or, as you might say, straight tensions, they create a counterbalance to the curved format and, if properly used, prevent it from spiralling or rolling.

**LAS** Is the problem the same with an ellipse as with the tondo, or more difficult?

**IB** An ellipse will also affect straight lines, not so much against the smaller curves but against the wider curves. Again, a straight line is pushed away from the edge and, again, there is a feeling almost of vibration, as with the plucking of a string.

**MP** But with the diamond-shaped canvas the problem of the edge becomes something quite different. How important is the edge to you?

**IB** The edge of the canvas is very important. But of course both with a tondo and an ellipse, and also a diamond shape, the shapes truncated



by these formats are inclined to continue and to complete themselves as regular shapes beyond the canvas. The human eye will try to see them as complete geometric shapes. This is the reason we can create overlapping effects out of a lot of L-shaped planes in Cubism, for example. We feel they are a bunch of rectangles overlapping each other. The eye completes them and therefore you have this overlap effect. At least this is the explanation given by Gestalt psychologists. And so the active area of the diamond format canvas is larger psychologically than it is physically, which is something gained. Another reason the diamond is bigger is that the diagonal measurements of a canvas are bigger than the dimensions of the same canvas measured as a square. A sensation of freedom is gained through this seemingly larger size.

**LAS** You have been speaking of lines in many of your compositions. But in many of your canvases there are no lines at all. We're speaking of planes then, aren't we?

**IB** No. I would consider the edges—what are now called hard edges—as lines. I would say that in my paintings, all the edges are linear tensions, at least in my own vocabulary, although I don't say that anyone else has to accept this vocabulary.

**LAS** Can you tell us about some of the special problems involved in mural painting?

**IB** The mural is not exactly an easel painting. With a mural, you think of the entire room and how the mural fits architecturally. A painting can be shown in many different rooms, so it's not entirely the same problem. When you show a painting, you hope that the room is not so ugly architecturally that it will ruin your painting, but you don't really worry about the architecture. In the case of a mural, you try to be in sympathy with the space designed by the architects. This is not a simple proposition because the architect has to consider the zoning laws, the customer's taste, the various needs of plumbing pipes, of structural material and so forth. He may not be a pure artist. He is also bound by engineering. A mural may be pure art and yet the artist must consider limitations imposed on architecture. So it isn't quite what Mondrian thought of as architecture, the queen of the arts, combining all the pure elements in itself, because ideal architecture becomes Constructivism. It's beyond any zoning laws, beyond any customer's taste and beyond any plumbing pipes. In other words, a mural by its nature has to be a sort of compromise with the space which is given to you. You might improve the space by creating a feeling that the room is wider than it really is, for example, or higher.

**MP** Is that your intention?

**IB** In the case of the mural for the North Central Bronx Hospital, which I was commissioned to paint last year, the

- room is almost a couple of hundred feet long and only about thirty some odd feet wide. By having an extremely strong horizontal movement in the mural, I sort of spread the space a bit. Now, this space is certainly not the fault of the very talented architect, Helge Westermann. He had to design within certain limitations a staff cafeteria for so many hundreds of people. He liked my mural very much for itself and because it came in handy in doing something to the space. This is not quite the same as Mondrian's idea of a room ideally designed including all the arts. It's rather a situation of two arts assisting each other.
- MP** Could we discuss your technique? Why is it that you like to use a brush when you get all of the brushstrokes out of the surface of the canvas?
- IB** If you look closely enough, the brushwork is there. It's much less obvious than in Mondrian, where it is quite rich, and in Malevich even richer. I avoid contrasting textures in my brushwork which almost create a collage effect. This is fine for some styles, but not for Neo-Plastic painting.
- LAS** Do you build up a series of coats of brushwork on top of one another?
- IB** Yes, but generally I paint in parallel strokes.
- LAS** Sometimes you feel with Mondrian, he was painting with the end of his brush. How do you lay the paint on?
- IB** I use long-hair brushes and I paint flat to get a smoother texture but still there is brushwork. The texture is there, but it is minimized. It's still handwork, it's not any mechanical process, like using a roller.
- MP** Do you object to using mechanical devices?
- IB** Well, personally I don't feel the need of them, though I would use them if I did.
- LAS** Do you like the physical, sensuous effect of using a brush, is it an essential part of your whole artistic experience?
- IB** Yes, to me it gives you more of the feeling of the paint quality.
- LAS** Is this true in your studies, most of which are either gouaches or casein rather than watercolor. In these, the stroke is very different, much richer and thicker, than in a watercolor.
- IB** Casein is more sensuous than watercolor; so is acrylic. I don't like watercolor. It's too thin, there is no body to it.
- LAS** When and how did you decide to do sculpture?
- IB** I did an abstract stone carving before the Second World War. And I also did two small semi-abstract wooden carvings of figures. Not until the early 1960's did I start on the

columns. I started them because at that time I was painting around the edges of the canvas rather than just up to the edge of the painting, and I was ready for a three-dimensional approach. Besides, of course, one of the tenets of the philosophy of Neo-Plastic painting is that architecture and art should be very much united. I have some reservations about obtaining pure results from this though. In the late fifties I rented a studio in New Paltz, New York. The owner of the building was a woodworker and he had all sorts of leftover cubes of wood and columns. So I had a chance to buy some stuff and get started. You might say it's rather odd that I didn't do it before. Well, you know when you teach fulltime, paint most of the night, grade papers, you haven't got much energy to go out and shop for things, so this was a Godsend. I started doing columns. The first ones, I made from some cubes of wood. First I painted them in oil but I realized that oil had too rich a texture for such columns. It looked too velvety. Acrylic is a much dryer, crisper medium and is better.

MP Do you ever use acrylic on your canvases now?

IB Now I use acrylic on my canvases because they go to many traveling shows and often get banged up; and acrylic can be restored more easily than oil. It dries more quickly, so you can paint twenty canvases and the studio is still possible to use. And I like the texture. In oils I always wanted to achieve a dull finish. If you do it by

diluting the oil medium too much, your paintings become very fragile. In acrylic you get a dull finish without damaging the medium.

LAS How do you prepare the ground for an acrylic?

IB I prime canvases with acrylic gesso and sand the ground before I start to paint. Otherwise you get too much texture.

LAS Have you ever tried a staining technique? Does that interest you at all?

IB No, it's too much like watercolor. I don't like watercolor and I don't like stains. Again, I'm not against it for others, only for myself.

LAS Can we discuss your color? I don't think that I have ever seen green in one of your canvases. Does this follow along with Mondrian's hatred of green? Or just don't you like green anyway?

IB Well, I don't like green. Although I try to use it. I tried to use green and finally I couldn't stand it. Somehow it wasn't a final color. Green is considered nowadays to be one of the primary colors. Yellowish-green, orange-ish-red, and purplish-blue. These are the primaries. Not what Mondrian considered to be the primaries—blue, yellow and red. These are no longer the primaries, but I accept Mondrian's primaries as being the correct psychological ones. The others, even if they are scientifically primaries, somehow just don't feel right.



LAS What are your favorite blues?

IB I use different types of blues. I'm not a purist like Mondrian. I'll go from medium blue to light, from purplish-blue to light cerulean and use very deep blue too. Sometimes I might even use black as a color although black, as any Impressionist could have told you, is not a color. Black pigment in a very dark painting, let's say, opposed to purple or purplish-blue becomes deep golden-greenish. So the colors on the periphery of blackness can achieve very interesting, unusual effects. And colors on the periphery of whiteness can change their character. This has not been explored quite enough. I've done some white paintings.

LAS How do you get the opalescent effect in the white? Those white canvases are called *Opalescent*.

IB They must have some off-white shades of blue in them. If a color is almost white, but actually is a greenish-blue opposed to a color which is almost white but slightly violet-blue, and there is one which you might call, artistically—not scientifically—, more or less pure blue which is also almost white, and they are placed next to each other, the human eye first of all might see them separately as plain white. When you see them together they vibrate and the whole thing seems to shimmer. You finally distinguish between them—the greenish ones become green, the purplish ones become purple and the one in the middle, which you called pure blue, your eye cannot see any more as blue and begins to see it as a cream color. As I

said, you create an interesting shimmer, an opalescence, which is not the same as the Impressionists would use. It's using a color contrast: two colors close to white and a third color which is so close to both that the human eye, on seeing the two contrasting ones cannot perceive the color of the third because it's too close to both of them, so it sees it as something else. And so the eye sees it as a complementary which becomes almost cream.

MP Can you tell us about your work habits? Do you use measurements or preliminary studies, or do you use tapes the way Mondrian did? Do you work in a formularized way or would you say you were much more intuitive?

IB It's very hard to define. Nowadays, I might do a little scribble, then the idea develops, then I go ahead. Sometimes I might make sketches of the mural after the mural is done and I might develop other sketches from that. I can't say. As to intuition, Vantongerloo was a painter who used to develop mathematical formulae into art. And at the end of his life he decided this was a lot of balderdash because he realized he was using intuition. He was using his intuition to construct. And I know, of course, that Le Corbusier used mathematics, but if he didn't have intuition as an artist he wouldn't have been Le Corbusier. So beyond all his mathematics, Le Corbusier was still the intuitive poet, except the poet was a Constructivist and not a lyrical, romantic poet. You might say, well,

if he was using intuition, why wasn't he an Expressionist? There are different types of intuition. There is an entirely intellectual intuition and there is a very, very emotional intuition. Without intuition you cannot be much of an artist.

MP I think what I was actually getting at is, do you start with any preconceived proportions?

IB No, because I know there are all sorts of possibilities from my previous experiments, but as to which one is right in each case, which combination, what new development, I am not sure. I mean I might try something and then that idea develops. As to how, I don't know . . . the ideas come in different sorts of ways. Sometimes while conversing with somebody on totally irrelevant subjects I relax, an idea clicks and there I see it. I think this is true of many people but they're not conscious of it.

LAS When you walk into the studio in the morning, feeling that you want to get down to painting, what motivates you consciously or unconsciously as to what to lay out on your palette?

IB I wouldn't be too sure of even that, because as I start dividing the canvas, somehow the divisions suggest colors. Then I wipe them out, change proportions and a different set of colors imposes itself. Areas of color seem to dictate each other. It's not like Kandinsky's idea of a shape dictating a color because I don't use any variety of shapes, only proportions.

LAS And you work it out as you go along?

IB Generally so. The idea develops in the process. I could tell you I have a great scientific system, but that wouldn't be honest.

LAS I think we could describe you as an intuitive intellectual painter.

IB I suspect that most artists are. Even if they never admit it. I suspect that most of our thinking is based, first of all, upon some intuition and then some intellectual system develops out of that. I am discussing a certain inner human need. Maybe you are creating some proportions in a painting that for some reason are satisfying to you and yet you cannot quite put it in words. But then, you can explain the direction of a style, the purpose, though not why this proportion fits here better than another. Somebody might say the other one is just as good, maybe slightly better. So you get into a field which is beyond language. Otherwise you would be able to say it better in an article than a painting.

LAS That's what is right about Picasso's saying "If I could have said it I would have said it and not painted it."

MP Speaking of saying it and not painting it, I think we're getting into another area, that of theory. Would you say that your aesthetic is tied to a philosophy, a religious concept, a way of life?

IB It's definitely connected to Platonism and definitely parallels Worringer's book *Abstraction and Empathy* in regard to abstraction.

**LAS** Mondrian has a certain element of religion in his total aesthetic theories. He was, after all, early in his life, a Theosophist. Do you think mysticism is important in your work?

**IB** I wouldn't say it is. Mondrian was a Theosophist and so was Kandinsky. Yet the results were entirely different on canvas. Kandinsky's work is explosive and mystical and Mondrian's is architectonic and the mysticism there is almost mathematical, though he didn't use mathematics.

**LAS** What are your religious feelings?

**IB** I'm an agnostic. I like Plato's idea of the absolute, of the existence of the absolute someplace—whether this absolute has independent being or is a product of the human mind. According to Plato, you know, all these ideas are real. Not, of course, as physical existence, but they form a real, abstract world—the absolute.

**LAS** And you think, as an artist, you can present that in your work?

**IB** Well, I can approach it. I don't think you can ever present any absolute in art. But you can do your best to approach it.

**LAS** But that's what you are striving for . . . the absolute?

**IB** Yes, it's a continuing approach. If you ever achieved an absolute, you would have to stop painting because there's only one absolute possible. Since I am still painting, it means I have never quite achieved it. Mondrian did

the best Neo-Plastic paintings ever possible, but he still couldn't do only one painting. There was room for more approaches toward the absolute. On the human scale they were absolute enough, but not on an ideal Platonic scale.

**MP** I'm sorry to keep using Mondrian as a touchstone but he really is a touchstone, because the next question is about symbolism and reading symbolism into art. You know, it has been suggested that the vertical and horizontal represent maleness and femaleness in Mondrian's work; the Ying and the Yang, the squaring of the circle, perfection and so on. How would you relate that kind of thinking, that kind of system to your own work?

**IB** I don't know whether Mondrian ever worried about the Ying and the Yang, the sex idea behind the horizontals and verticals. Since this idea is so prevalent and everybody is assuming everything, you might as well ignore it. In other words, if everybody is immersed in such basics of human psychology, and if Mondrian had it just like everybody else, then it's nothing special, so let's just skip it. I am human, I am, of course, the same as others. But we are discussing that which has to do with Neo-Plasticism, not that which is common to all humanity.

LAS You're not conscious of symbolism in your own work?

IB No. Symbolism in my style is not at all important and actually it is to be avoided. Because it means that a painting is not what it is, but represents something else.

MP What is the intention in your painting, what is the intended communication?

IB The communication would be the creation of an ideal, balanced harmony. Something that in actual, biological existence is not given to man. And this is the Platonic ideal, the absolute, the ideal harmonious balance, which is not still, not symmetrical, but dynamic.

LAS And that's why the inner tension becomes so important?

IB This is the idea of Neo-Plasticism. And that's the way it is different from geometric painting, which strives for interesting combinations of geometric elements. Of course, you might say this is what Plato meant. Well, I don't think so. Plato thought geometric shapes were absolute. He said if you created art based on them, it would be absolute art. Yes, but if you oppose many geometric shapes against each other, you get associations, images and you go off again into stylization and stylized realism. I am sure he wouldn't have liked it. Of course he was too extreme. He felt that artists were liars. So when I talk about Plato, I mean Plato as interpreted from my own particular preference.

LAS Can you explain how you came to choose the Neo-Plastic direction?

IB I can give you all sorts of reasons which may be completely false about why I prefer to paint in the Neo-Plastic style. It is my own reaction to whatever I experienced. Of course, other people who went through similar things paint automatic or Expressionist works—so that it is not necessarily an explanation that would fit every case. After I went through a lot of violent historical upheavals in my early life, I came to prefer a search for an ideal harmony and order which is still a free order, not militaristic, not symmetrical, not goose-stepping, not academic, you see. And this is my taste. Now you might say, where do you go from here, what do you do next? This somehow never bothered me because in the process of painting new possibilities develop and you can always go on. If your love of painting and your ability are sufficient, then your work will continue.

## Works in the Exhibition

## Paintings

1

*White Abstraction.* 1934-35

Oil on canvas, 35 x 19"

Collection Robert Hull Fleming  
Museum, The University of Vermont,  
Burlington, Vermont



2

*Painting from Collage.* 1937-40?

Oil on canvas, 12 x 12 1/16"

Lent by the artist





*Abstraction in Pink*, 1939

Oil and gesso on masonite, 30 x 27"

Lent by the artist



*Construction. 1939*

Oil and wood on board, 26 x 36"

Grey Art Gallery and Art Study  
Center, New York University,  
Anonymous Gift





*Oil Study for Mural for Health  
Building, Hall of Medical Science,  
New York World's Fair. 1938-39*

Oil on canvas, 30 x 48"

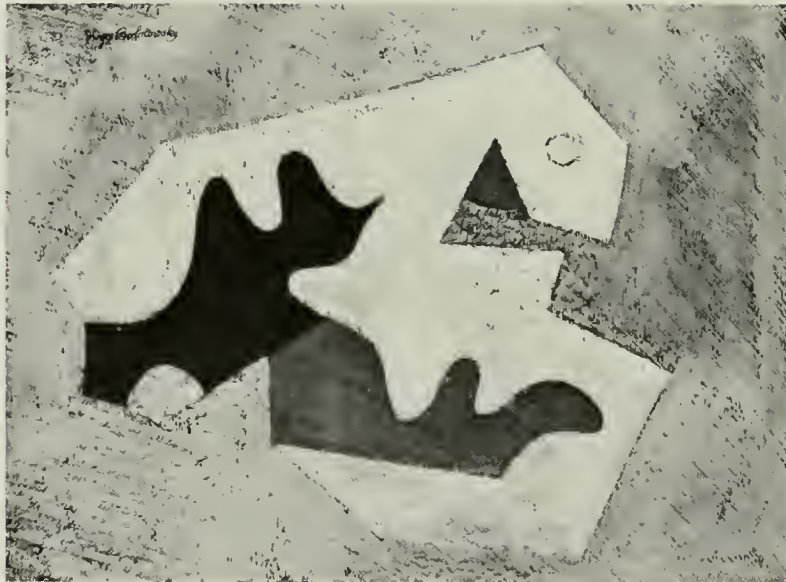
Lent by the artist



*Untitled*, 1939

Oil on wood, 9¼ x 12¼"

Collection Mr. and Mrs. George L. K.  
Morris



*Abstraction in Light Blue*, 1940

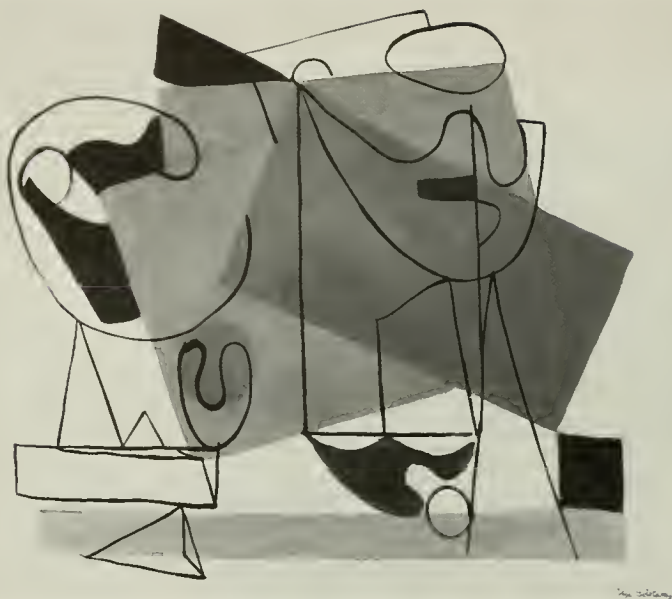
Oil on wood, 8 x 10"

Collection Philadelphia Museum  
of Art, A. E. Gallatin Collection

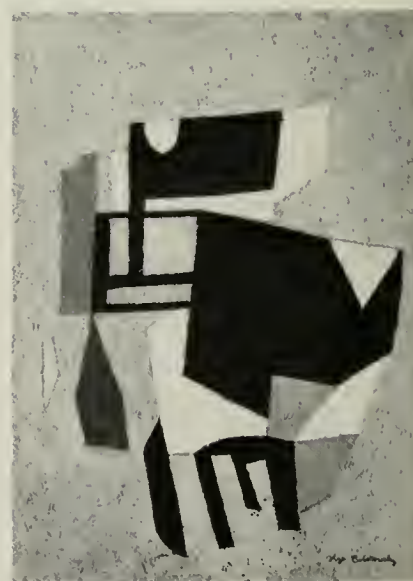


*Untitled Abstraction. c. 1940*

Oil on canvas, 18 x 24"

The Phillips Collection, Washington,  
D.C.*Untitled Abstraction. c. 1940*

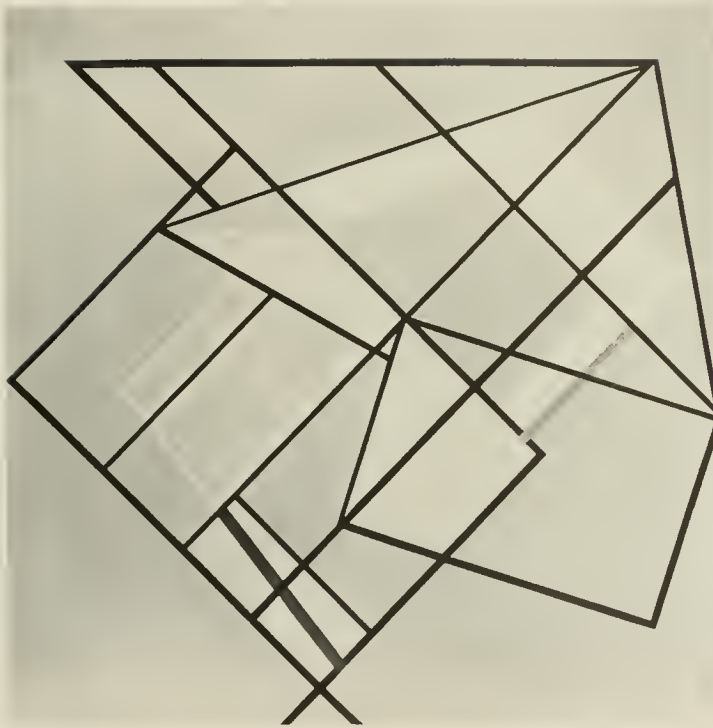
Oil on composition panel, 10 x 7"

The Phillips Collection, Washington,  
D.C.

*Construction in a Square*, 1940

Oil on canvas, 30 x 30"

Lent by the artist



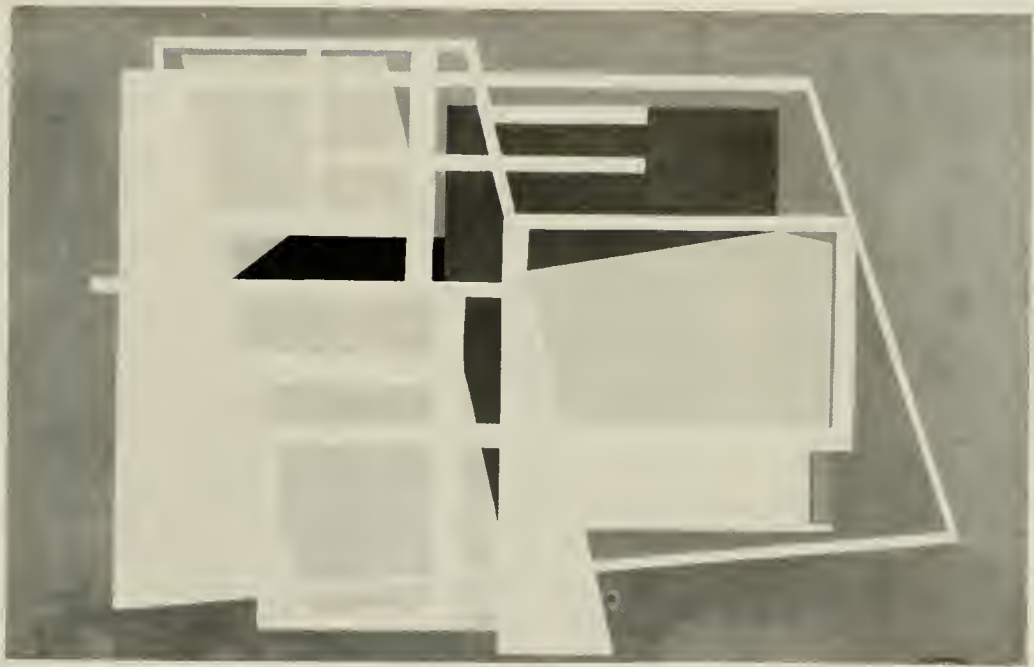
*Marine Abstraction.* 1940

Oil on canvas, 20¾ x 32¼"

Lent by the artist



*Black and White*. 1945  
Oil on canvas, 21 x 33"  
Lent by the artist





13

*Upright in Gold and Violet.* 1945

Oil on canvas, 41 x 22"

Collection The Solomon R.  
Guggenheim Museum, New York

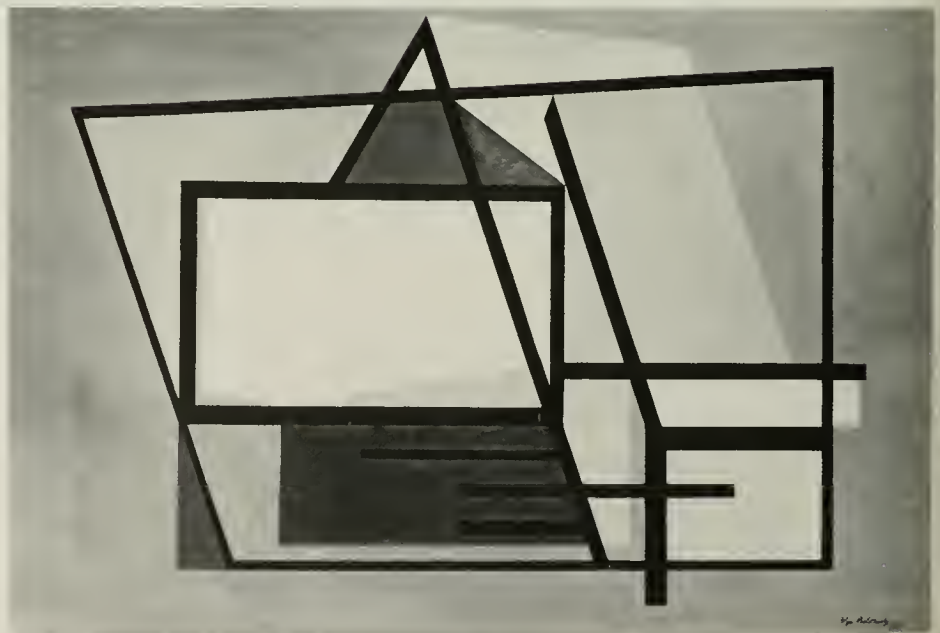


14

*White on Brown.* 1945

Oil on canvas, 20 x 30"

Lent by the artist



*Diagonal Plane.* 1947

Oil on canvas, 20 x 40"

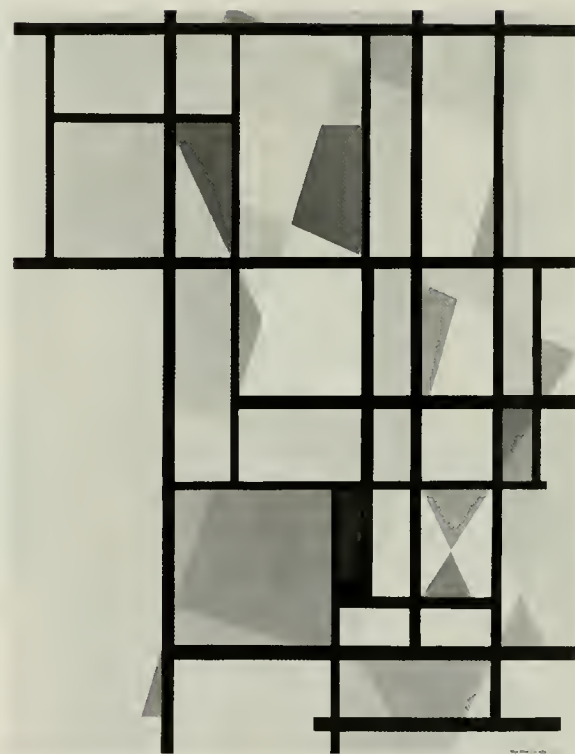
Lent by the artist



*Opalescent. 1947*

Oil on canvas, 32 x 24"

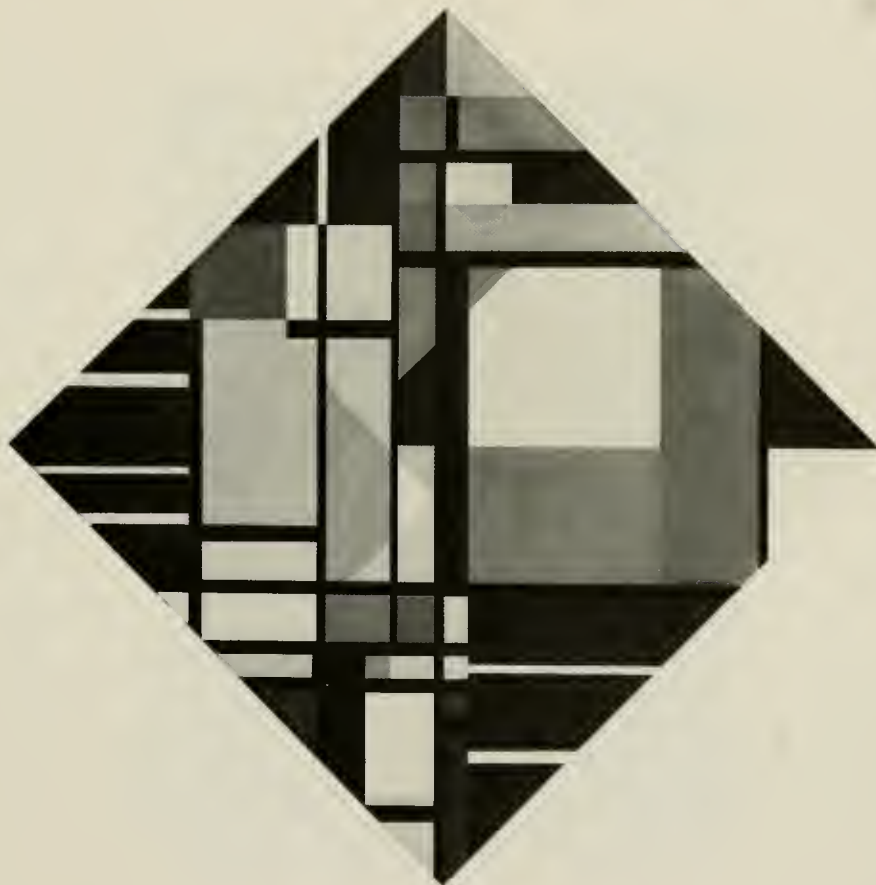
Lent by Grace Borgenicht Gallery,  
New York



*Arctic Diamond*, 1948

Oil on canvas, 30 x 30"

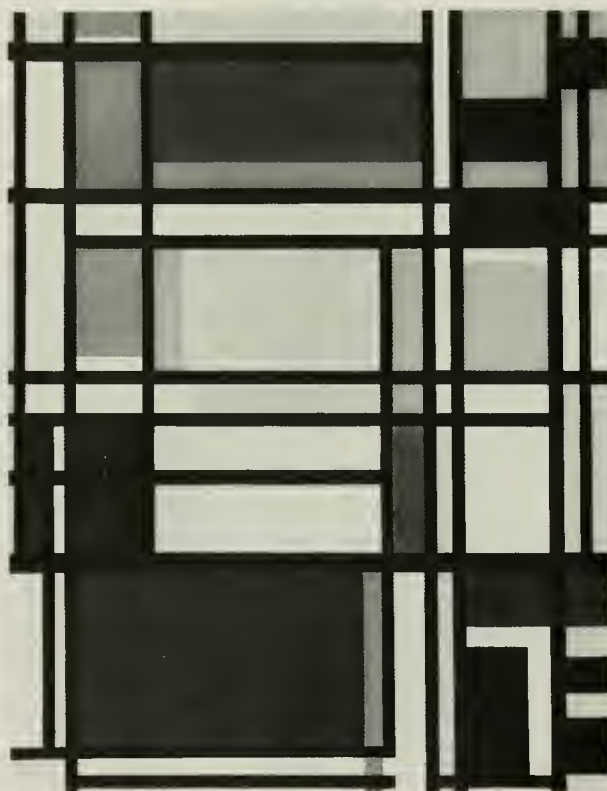
Lent by the artist



*City Rectangle*. 1949

Oil on canvas, 34 x 26"

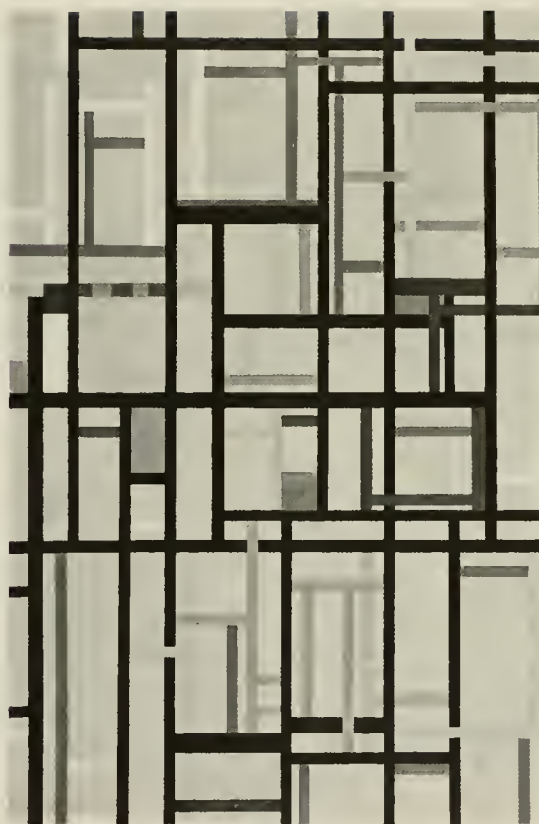
Lent by the artist



*Rectangular Space*, 1949

Oil on canvas, 40½ x 26½"

Lent by the artist



*Somber Key*. 1949

Oil on canvas, 36 x 42"

Lent by the artist



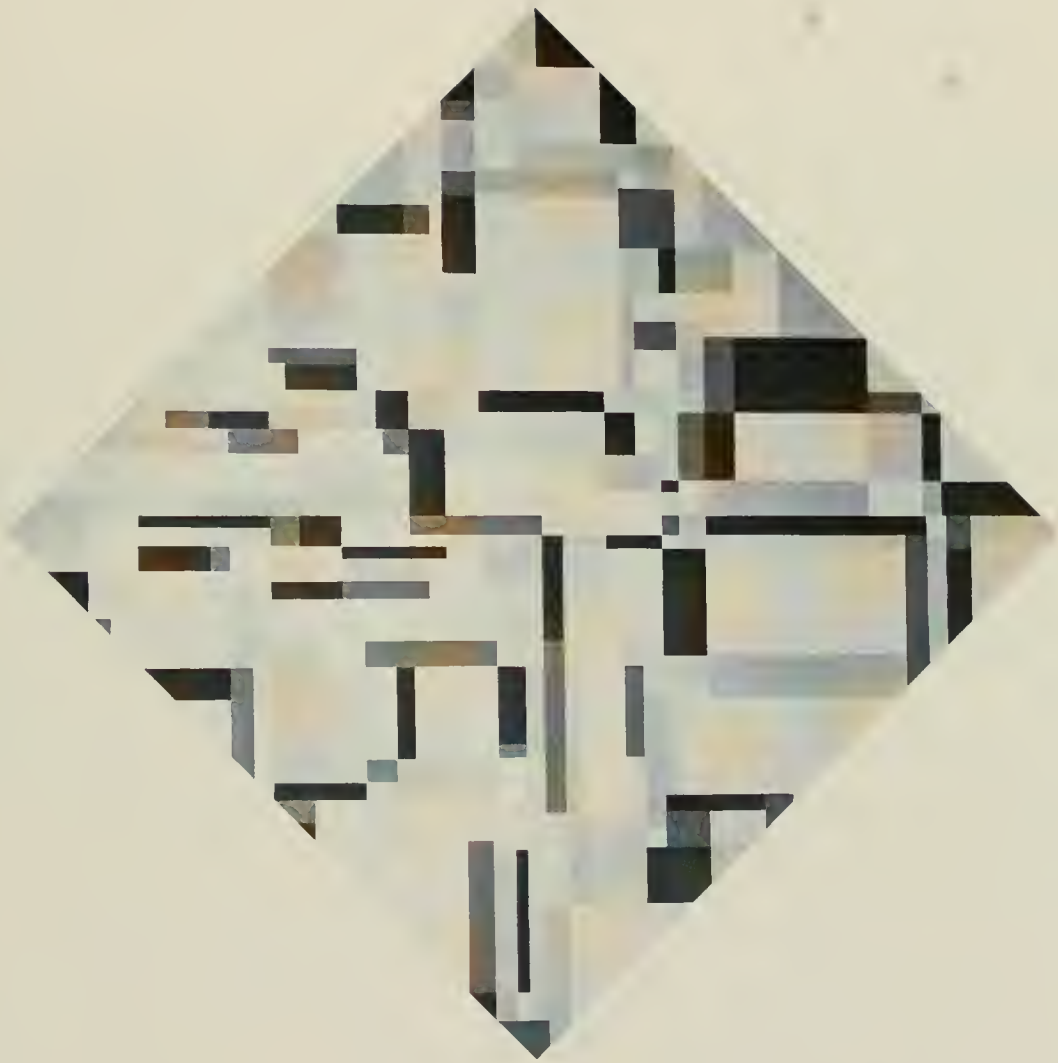


*Configurations within a Diamond.*

1951

Oil on canvas, 42 x 42"

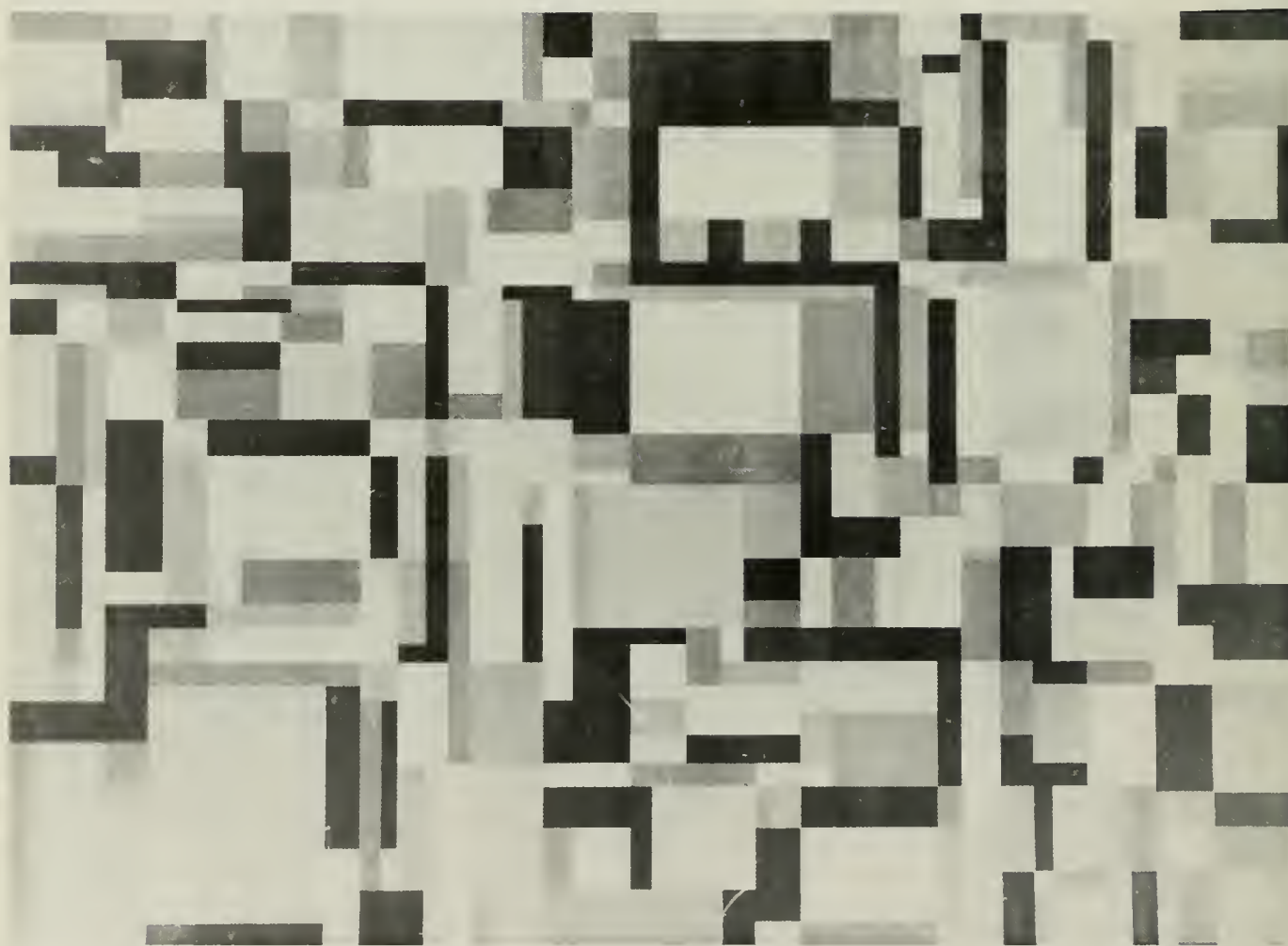
Lent by the artist



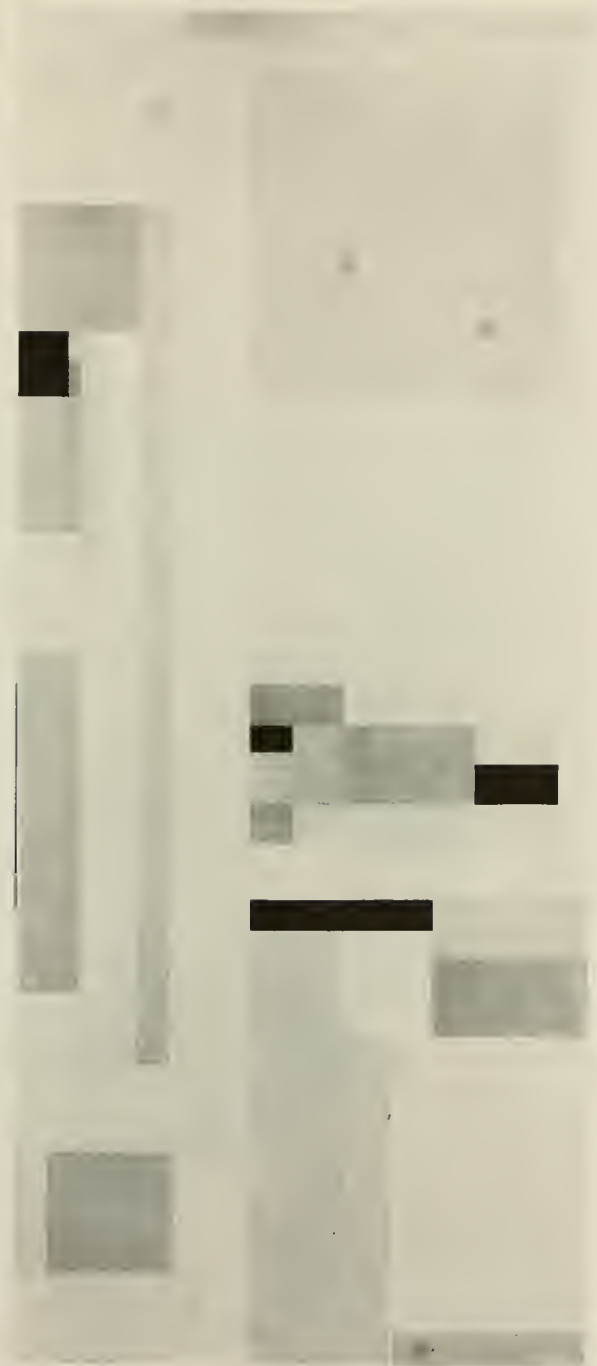
*Large Architectural. 1951*

Oil on canvas, 65 x 91"

Grey Art Gallery and Art Study  
Center, New York University,  
Anonymous Gift



*Large Vertical.* 1951-59  
Oil on canvas, 95¼ x 40½"  
Collection Whitney Museum of  
American Art, New York, Gift of  
Mr. and Mrs. N. E. Waldman



*Red Key. 1952*

Oil on canvas, 34 x 12"

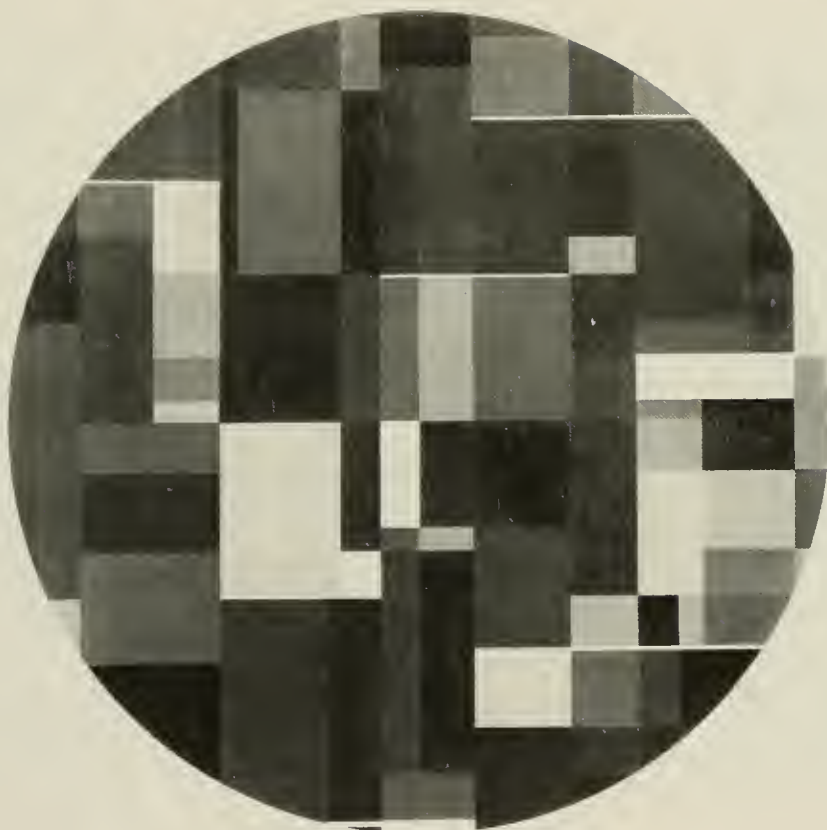
Collection Mr. and Mrs. Warren  
Brandt



*Tondo*. 1952-59

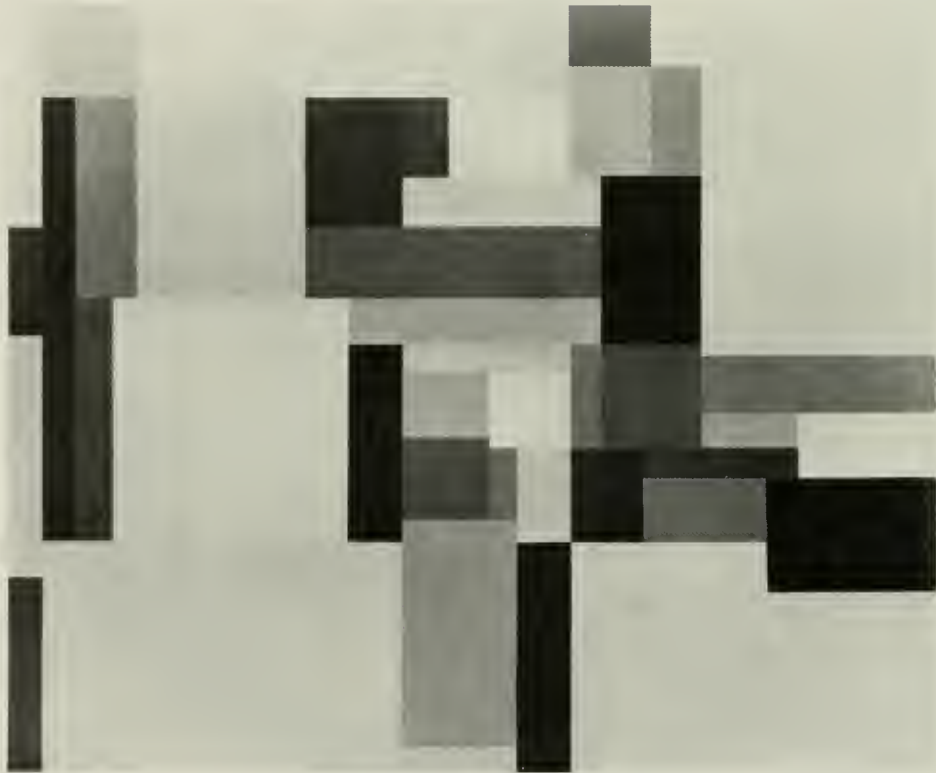
Oil on canvas, 42" diameter

Collection Bernard S. Solomon,  
New York



*Blue Rectangles*, 1953

Oil on canvas, 34 x 42"

Collection Whitney Museum of  
American Art, New York

*Opalescent Vertical*. 1955

Oil on canvas, 34 x 11"

Collection Mr. and Mrs. Warren  
Brandt

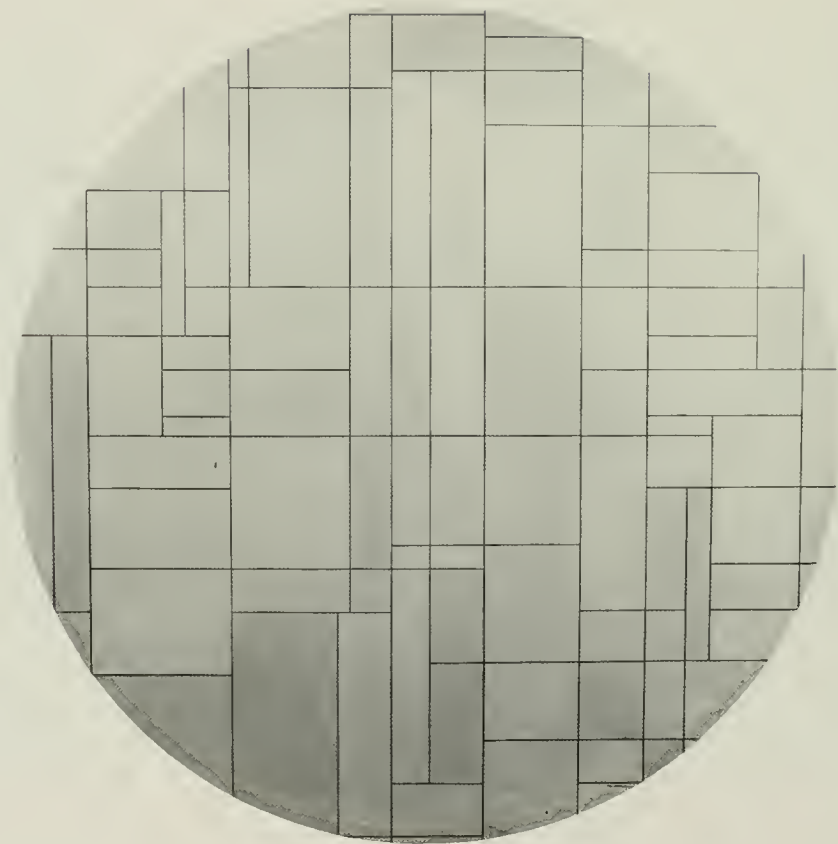




*White Circle*. 1955

Oil on canvas, 42" diameter

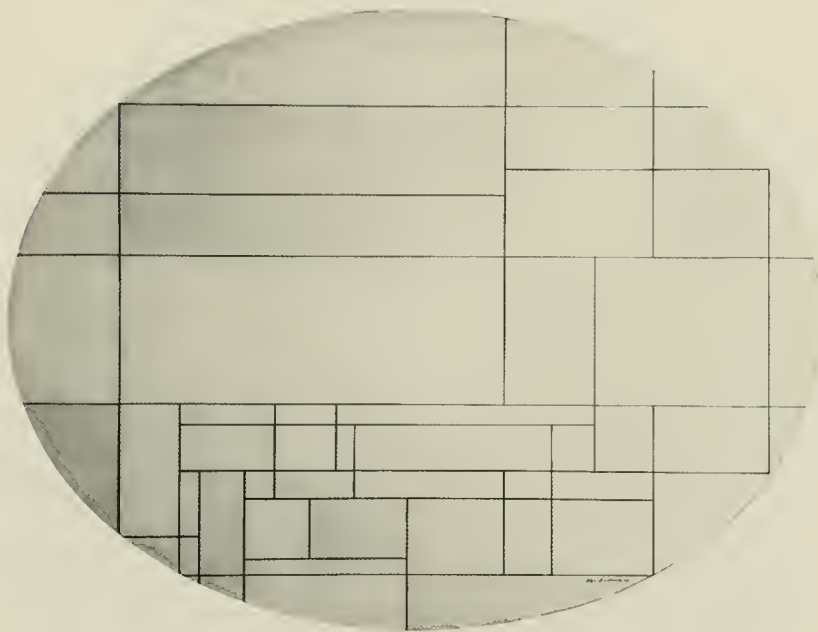
Grey Art Gallery and Art Study  
Center, New York University, Gift of  
Isadore Pizitz



*White Oval*, 1955

Oil on canvas, 18 $\frac{5}{8}$  x 24 $\frac{3}{4}$ "

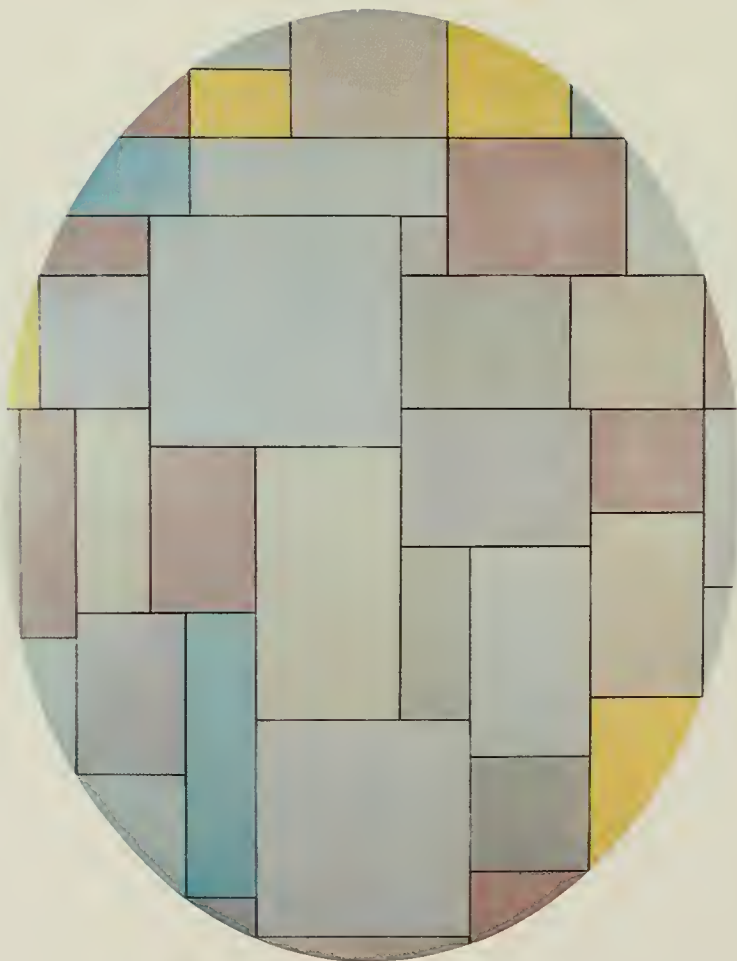
Collection The Cleveland Museum  
of Art



*Vertical Oval*. 1956-57

Oil on canvas, 45¼ x 35¼"

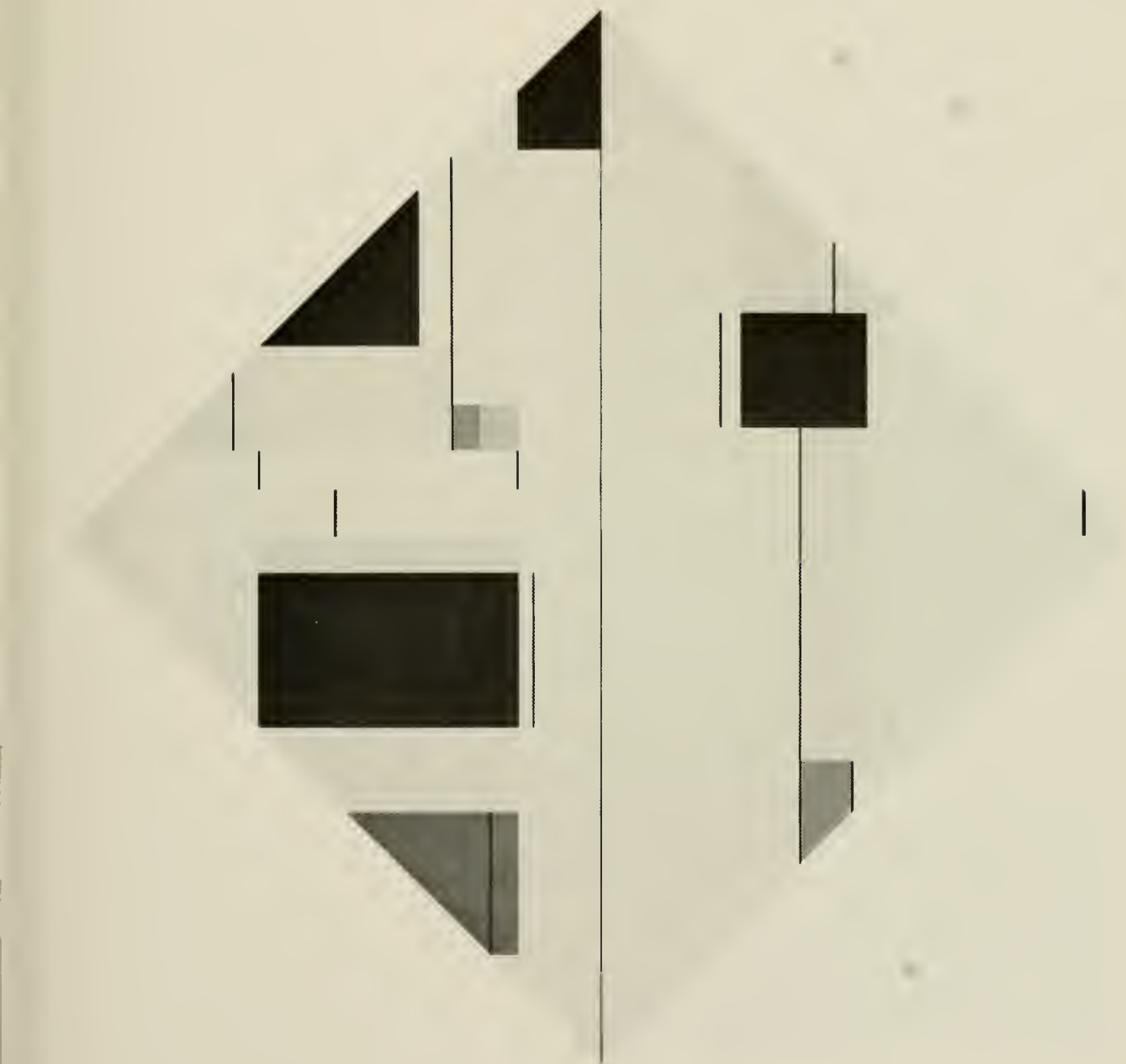
Collection Richard Gray,  
Chicago



*Large Cobalt Diamond. 1957*

Oil on canvas, 57 x 57"

Collection Richard Brown Baker

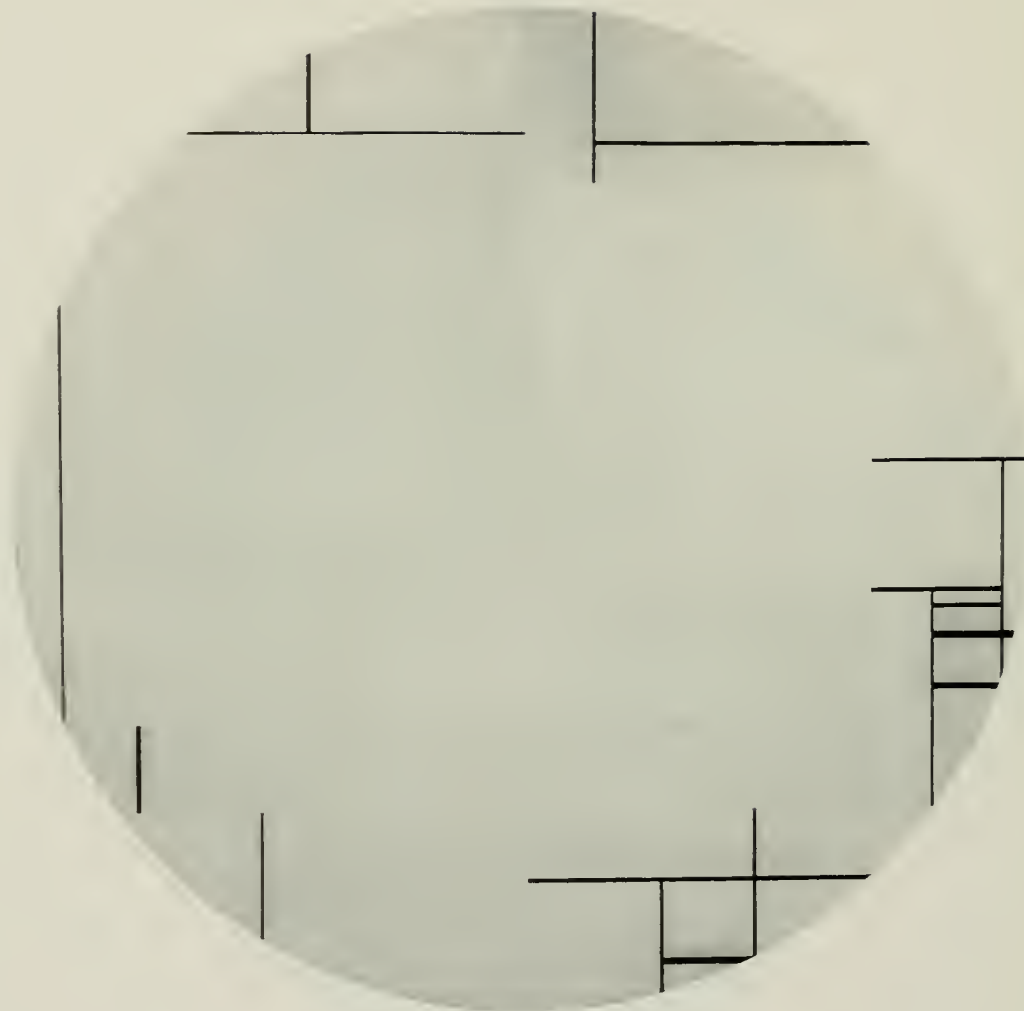


*White Circle.* 1958

Oil on canvas, 60 $\frac{3}{4}$ " diameter

Collection The Museum of Modern  
Art, New York, Gift of N. E.

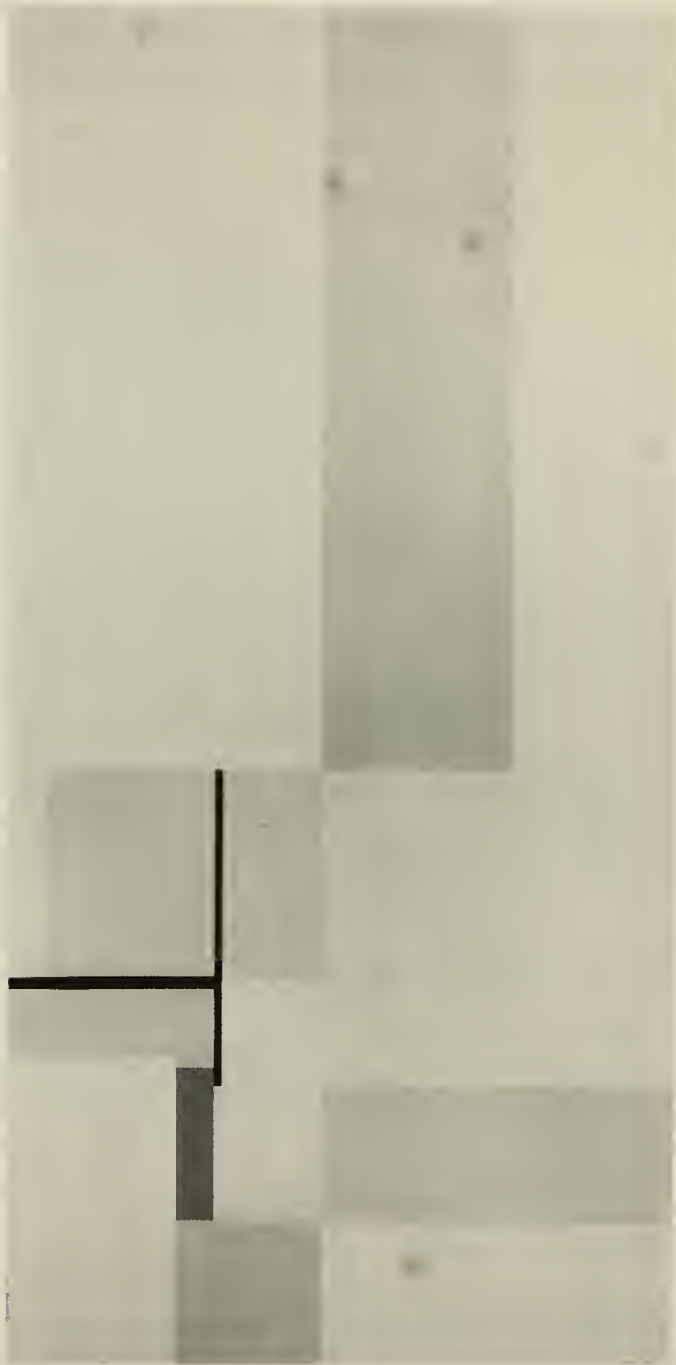
Waldman, 1960



*Horizontal or Vertical.* 1960-64

Oil on canvas, 64 x 32"

Collection of The Chase  
Manhattan Bank





*Red Tondo*, 1961

Oil on canvas, 47" diameter

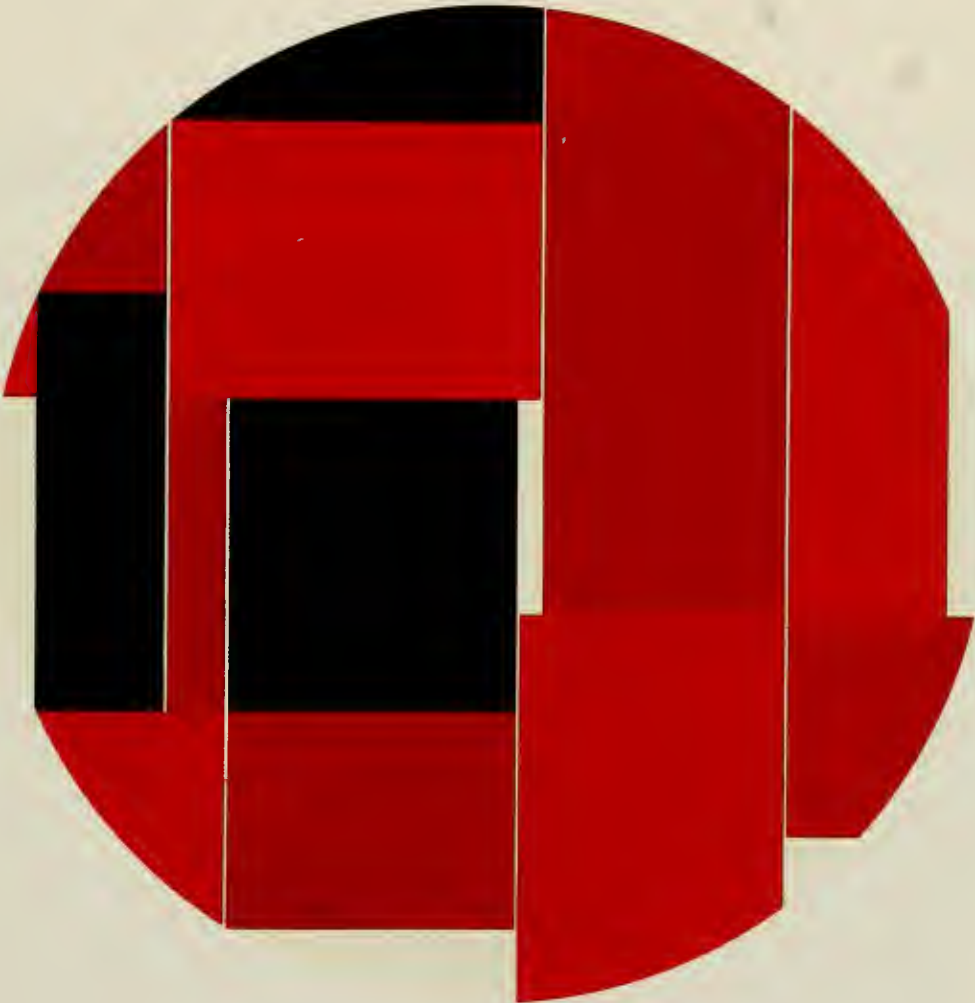
Collection American Republic  
Insurance Company, Des Moines,  
Iowa



*Red and Black Tondo. 1962*

Oil on canvas, 49½" diameter

Collection Sue and David Workman



*Black Ellipse*. 1963

Oil on canvas, 51 x 35½"

Lent by the artist



*Blue Plane. 1963*

Oil on canvas, 69½ x 86½"

Collection The Solomon R.  
Guggenheim Museum, New York



*Red and White.* 1964

Oil on canvas, 60 x 76"

The John F. Kennedy International  
Airport Collection, The Port  
Authority of New York and  
New Jersey



*Rising Tondo*. 1964-65

Oil on canvas, 58½" diameter

Collection University Art Museum,  
University of New Mexico,  
Albuquerque



*White on White*. 1965

Oil on canvas, 42 x 42"

Lent by the artist





*Black and Red Diamond.* 1967

Oil on canvas, 52½ x 52½"

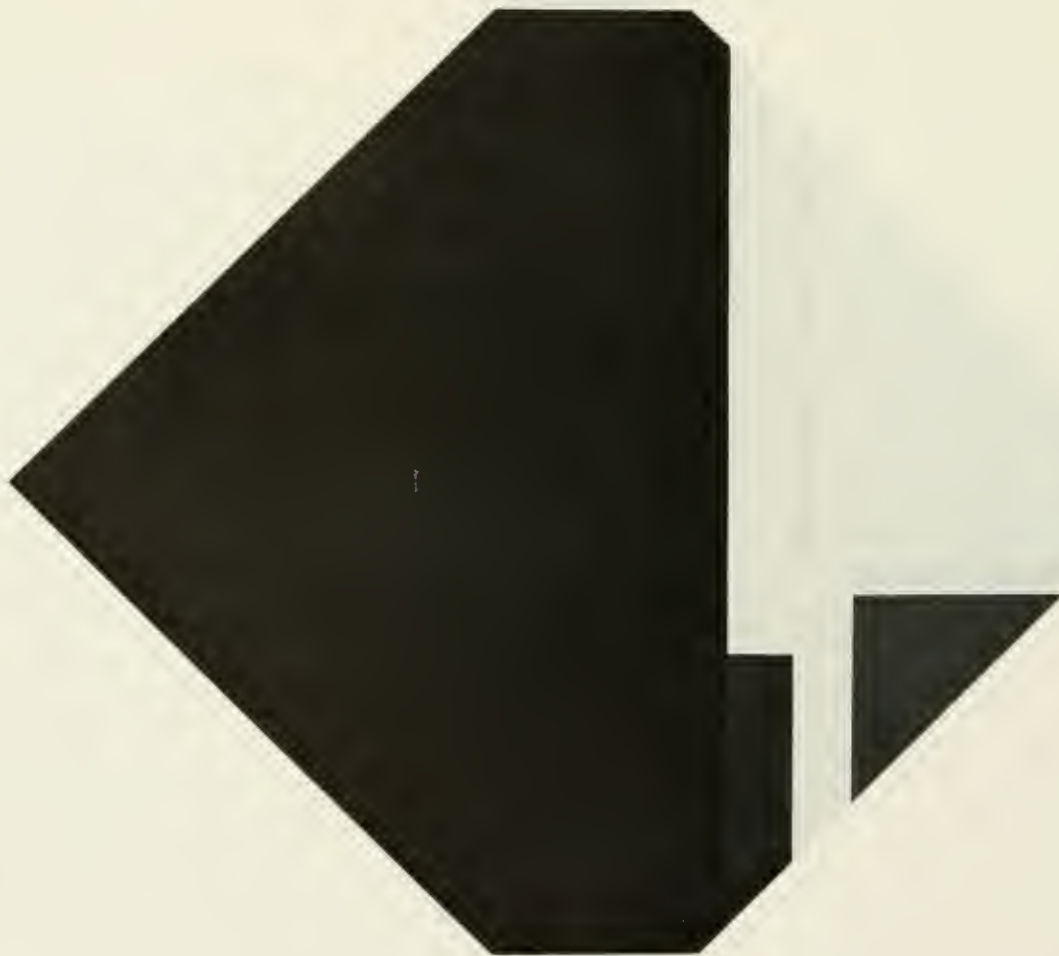
Collection of The Chase  
Manhattan Bank



*Black Red Diamond II*. 1967

Synthetic polymer on canvas, 52 x 52"

Collection Whitney Museum of  
American Art, New York,  
Gift of Phillip Morris, Incorporated



*Red Tondo*, 1967-68

Oil on canvas, 47½" diameter

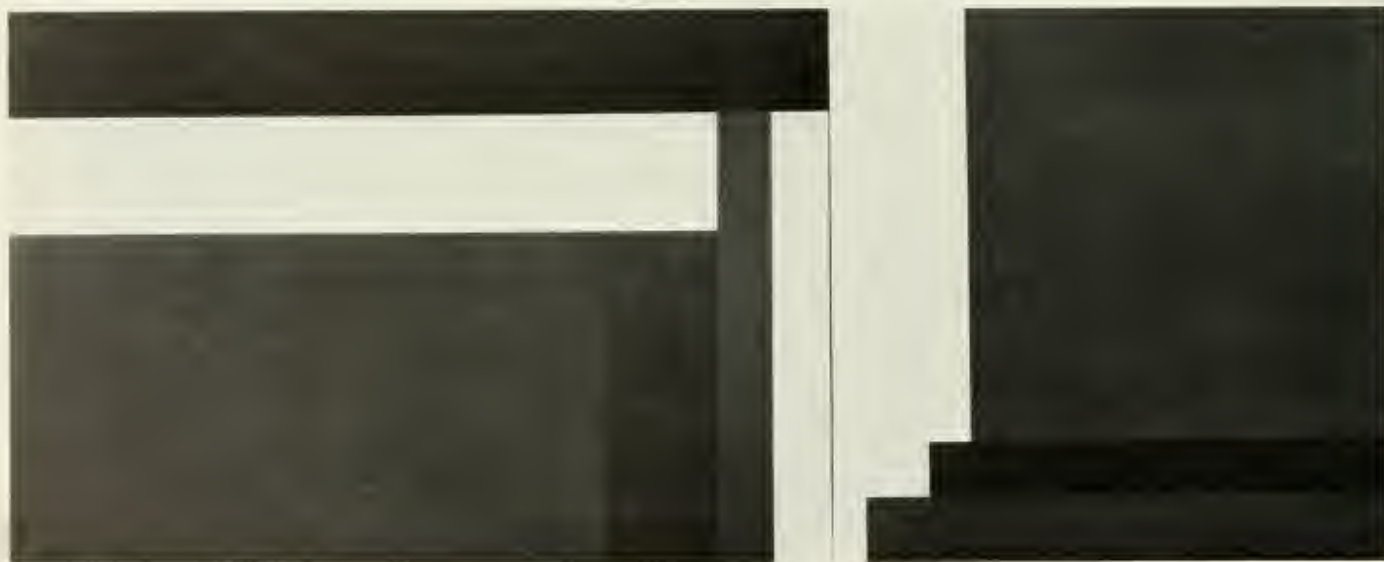
F. M. Hall Collection, University of  
Nebraska Art Galleries, Lincoln



*Large Blue Horizontal. 1968*

Oil on canvas, diptych, total  
48 x 120"

The Michener Collection,  
The University of Texas at Austin



45

*Vertical Lines*. 1968

Oil on canvas, 72 x 40"

Collection University of Iowa  
Museum of Art, Iowa City,  
Gift of the artist



*Diamond: Dominant Blue, White,  
Red. 1969*

Oil on canvas, 48 x 48"

Collection Mr. and Mrs. Malcolm  
Lowenstein, Franklin, Michigan



*Scarlet Diamond*. 1969

Oil on canvas, 48 x 48"

Collection Albright-Knox Art  
Gallery, Buffalo, New York,  
Gift of Seymour H. Knox

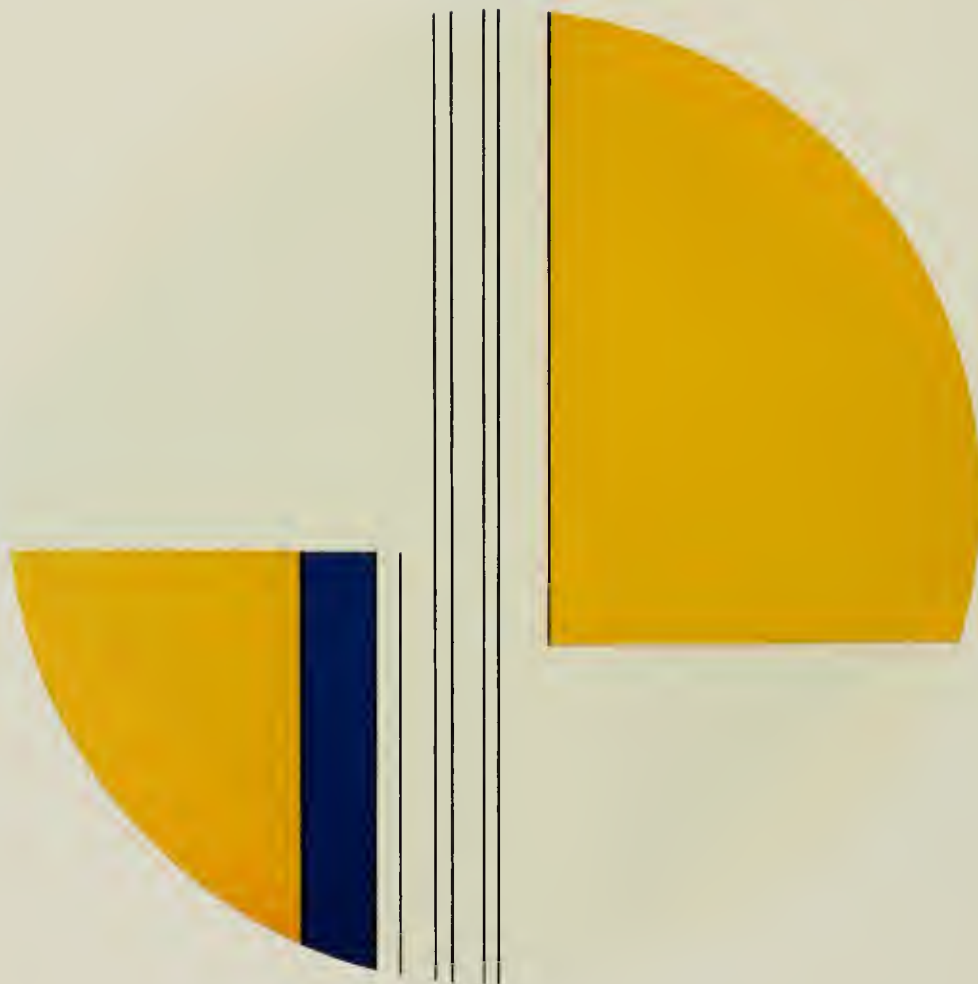




*Tondo with Blue and Yellow.* 1969

Acrylic on canvas, 47¼" diameter

Collection Dr. and Mrs. Sidney  
Merians



*Torreón Diamond*. 1969

Acrylic on canvas, 42 x 42"

Collection Fidelity International Bank



*Vertical Blue.* 1969

Acrylic on canvas, 40" diameter

Private Collection



*Elongated Diamond*. 1970

Acrylic on canvas, 79 x 46"

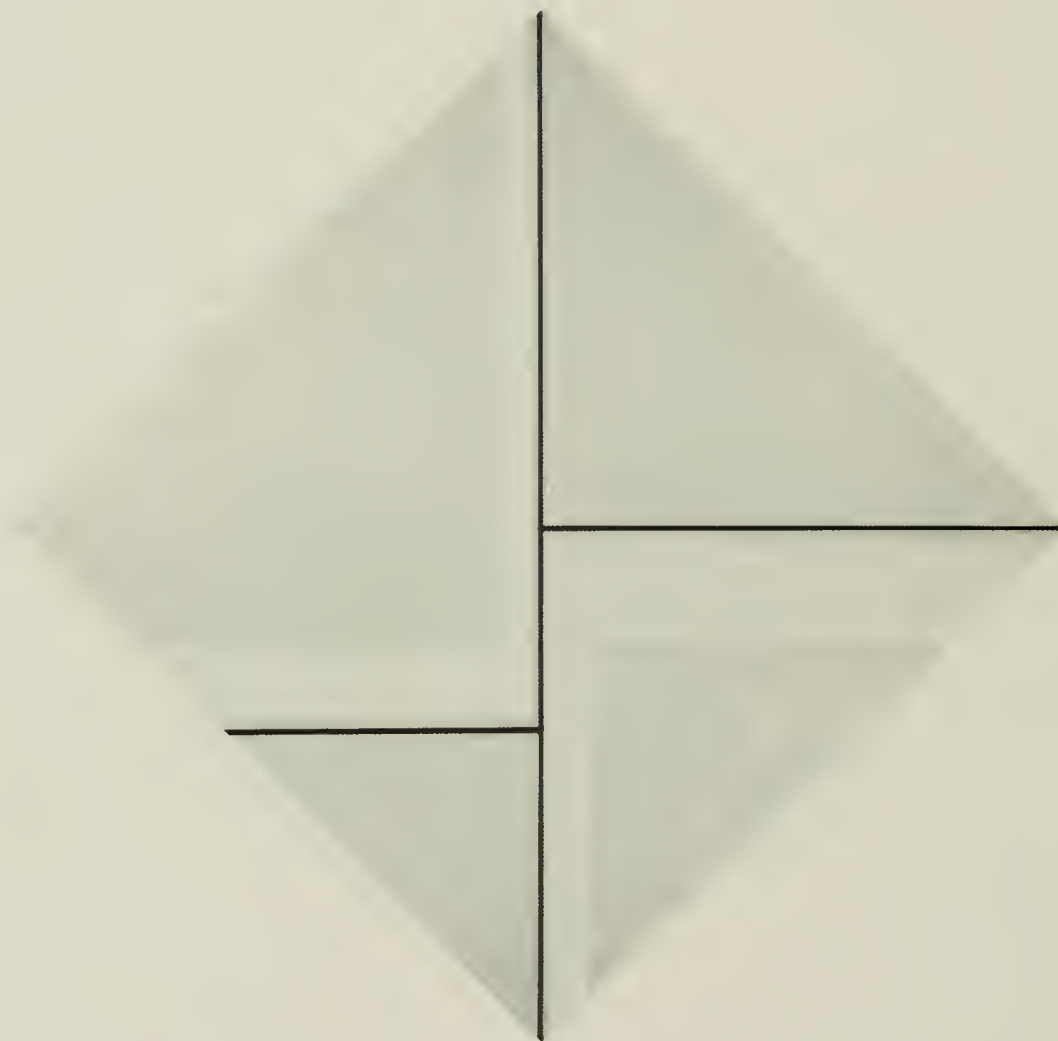
Lent by Grace Borgenicht Gallery,  
New York



*Vibrant Yellow Diamond*. 1970

Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 48"

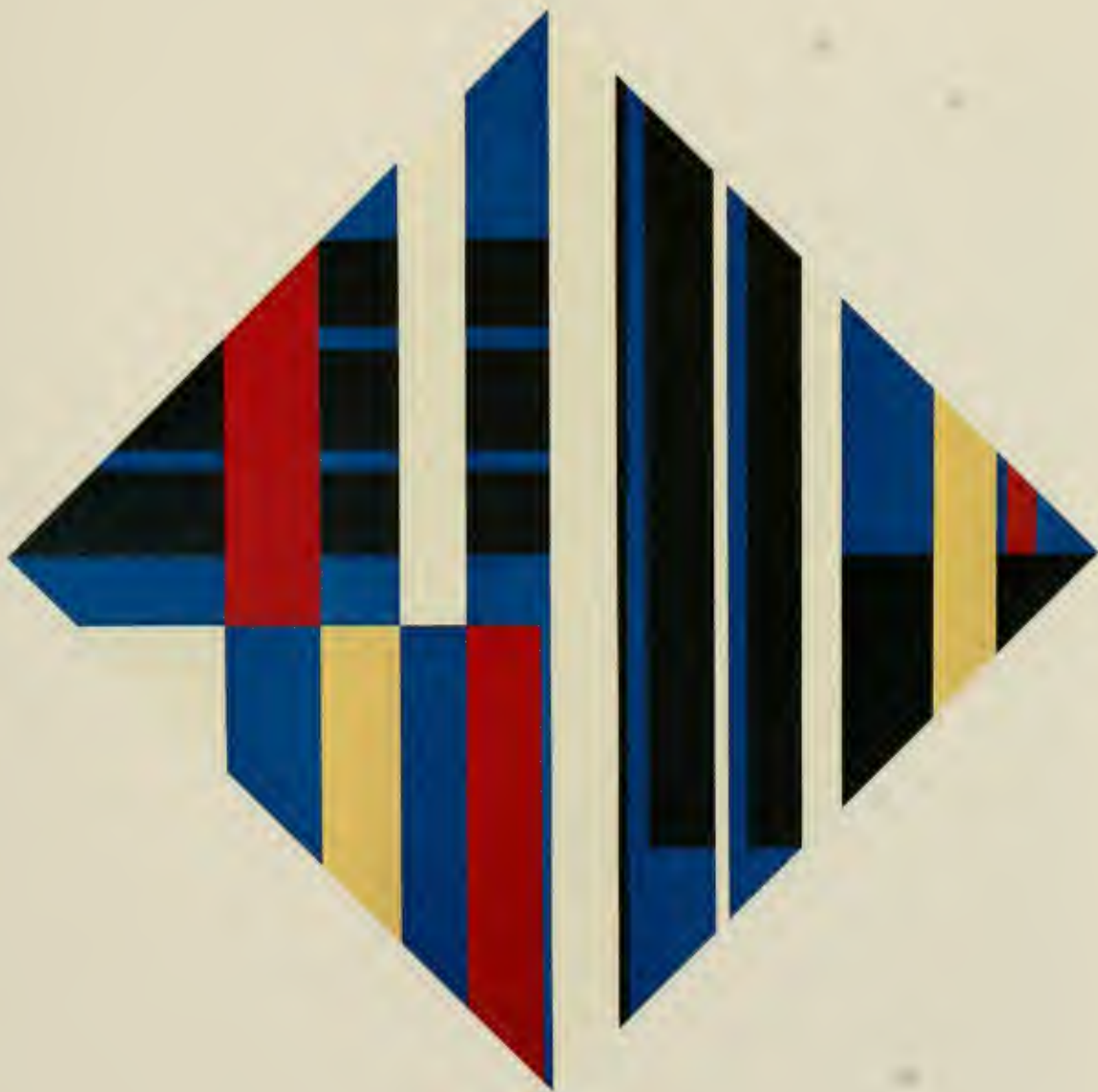
Lent by Grace Borgenicht Gallery,  
New York



*Dark Diamond*, 1971

Acrylic on canvas, 40½ x 42"

Private Collection, Great Neck,  
New York



*Large Black, Red and White  
Diamond. 1971*

Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 48"

Collection Dr. and Mrs. Sidney  
Merians





*Large Vertical Rectangle, Red,  
White, Yellow. 1971*

Acrylic on canvas, 72 x 36"

Collection Jeffrey Kasch, Milwaukee



*Vibrant Reds*. 1971

Acrylic on canvas, 72 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 48 $\frac{1}{8}$ "

The National Collection of Fine Arts,  
Smithsonian Institution,  
Washington, D.C.



*Yellow and Gray Diamond*. 1971

Acrylic on canvas, 42 x 42"

Private Collection



*Ellipse Red Vertical*, 1971-72

Acrylic on canvas, 51 x 35"

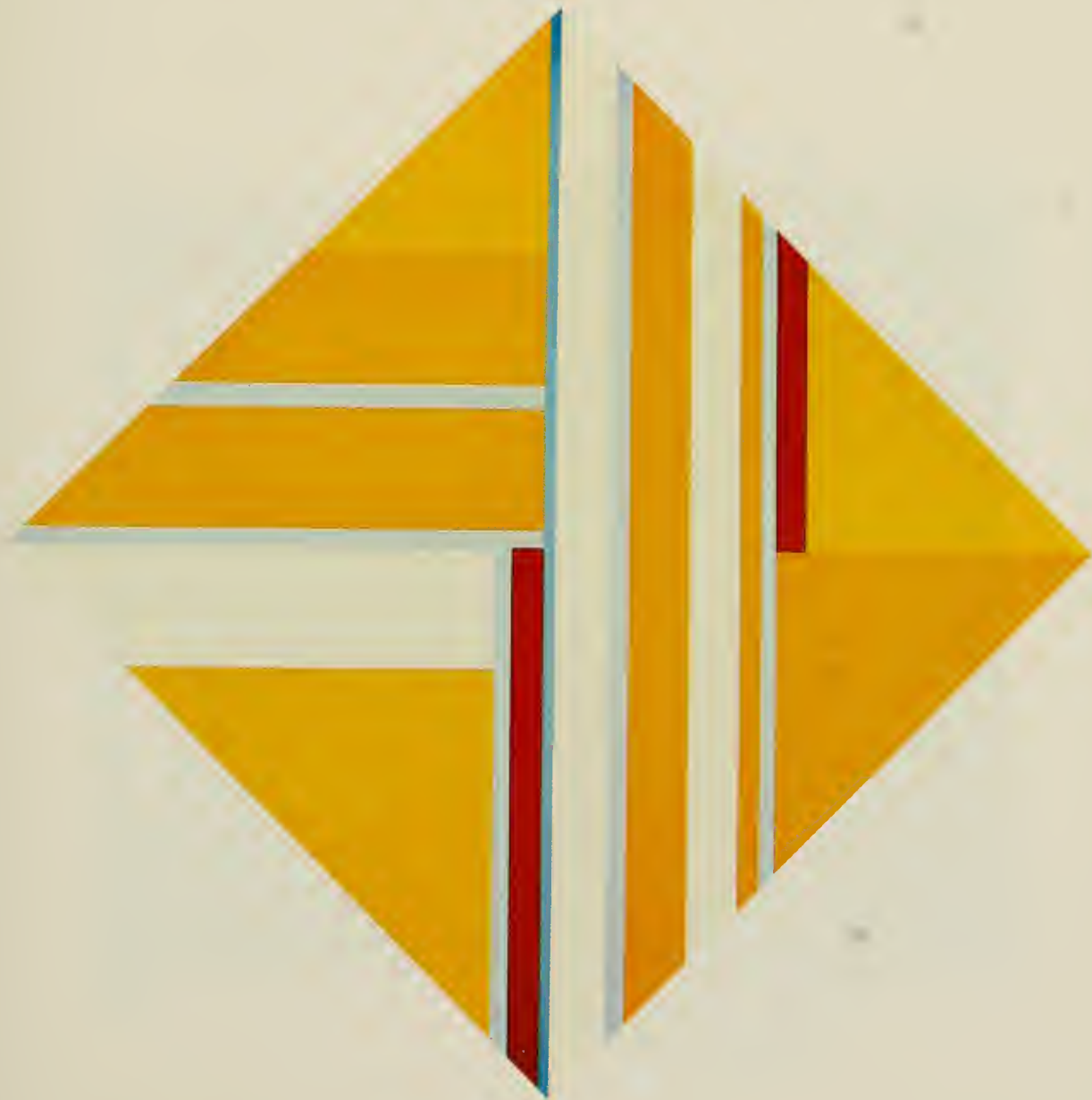
Lent by Grace Borgenicht Gallery,  
New York



*Diamond with Yellow and  
Orange. 1972*

Acrylic on canvas, 46½ x 46½"

Collection Mr. and Mrs. Sidney  
Singer, Jr.



*Red Rectangle. 1972*

Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 54"

Lent by Grace Borgenicht Gallery,  
New York



*Vertical Ellipse, Yellow, Black  
and Red. 1972*

Acrylic on canvas, 67½ x 45¼"

Collection Mr. and Mrs. Richard D.  
Lombard, New York





*Yellow Tondo*. 1972

Acrylic on canvas, 47½" diameter

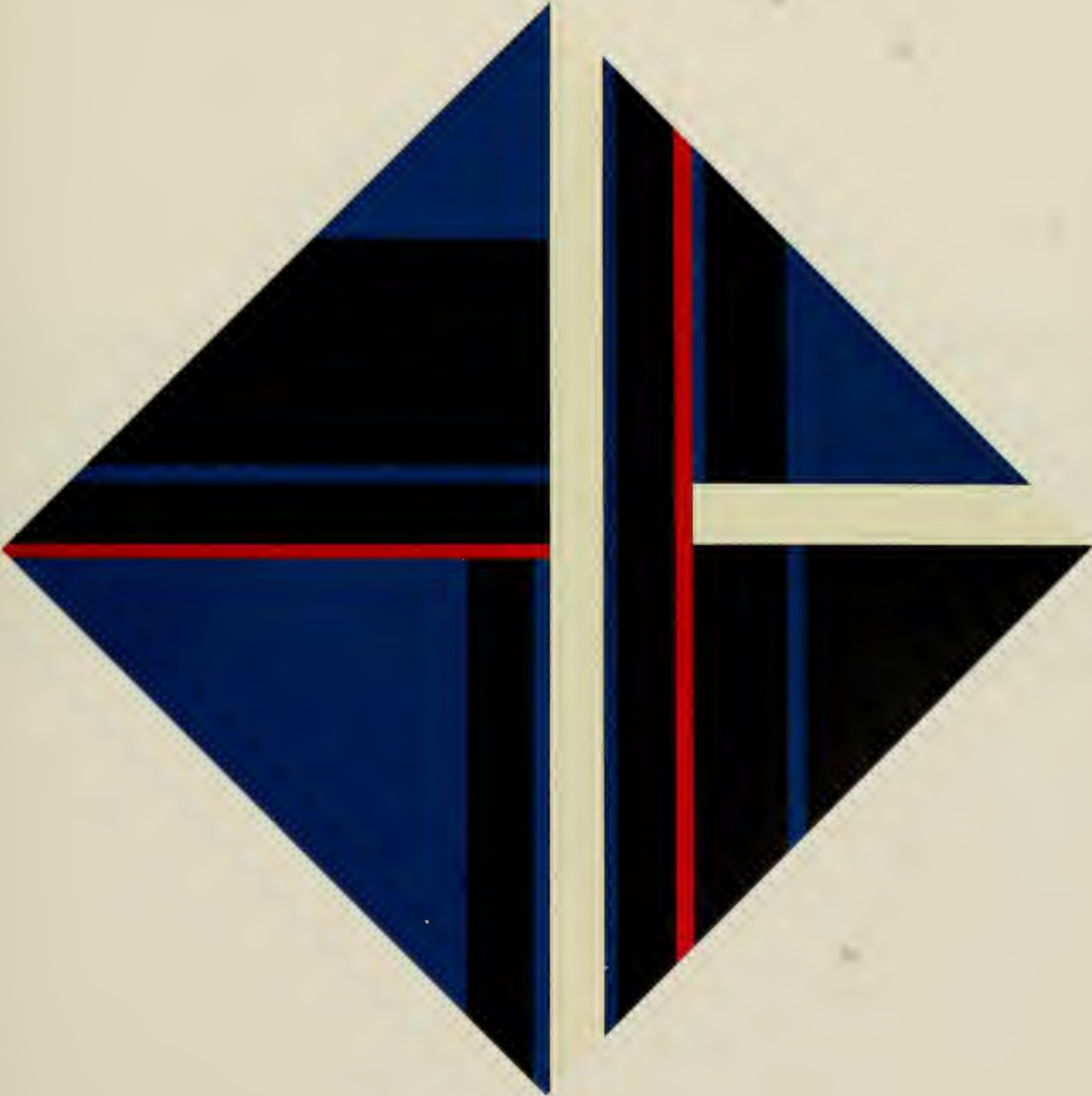
Collection Sue and David Workman



*Deep Blue Diamond*, 1973

Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 48"

Collection Mr. and Mrs. Stephen  
Singer



*Mural for North Central Bronx  
Hospital, New York City. 1973*

Acrylic on canvas, 72 x 264"

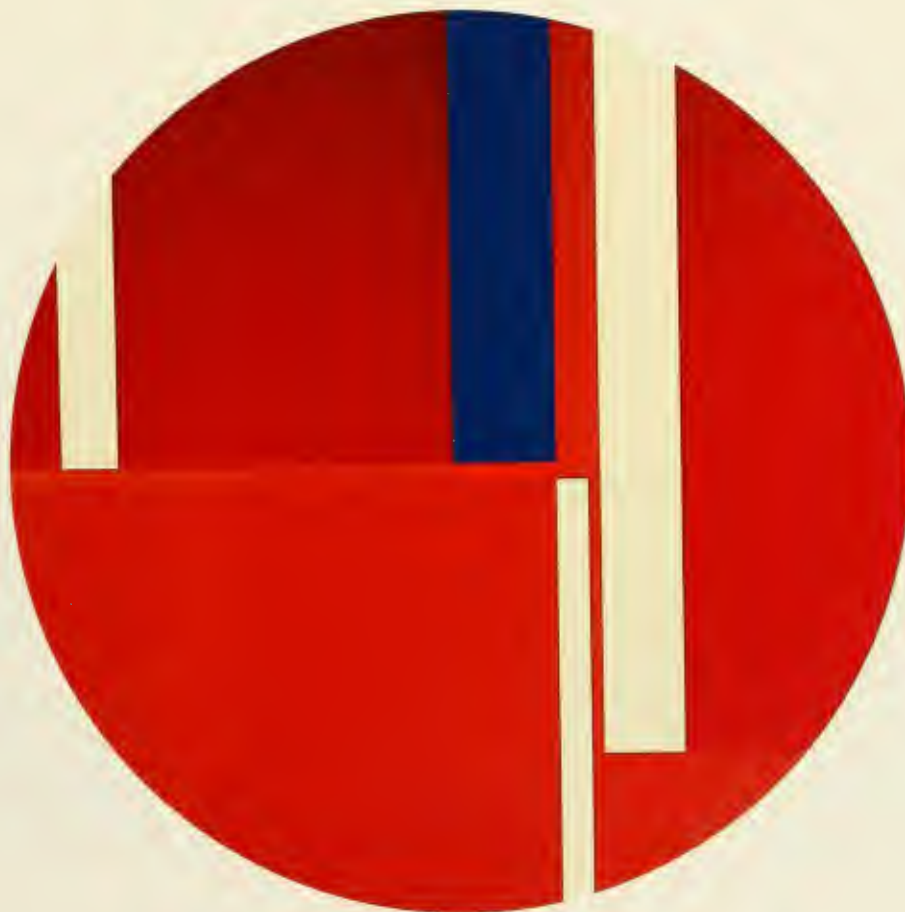
Lent by the artist.



*Red Tondo*. 1973

Acrylic on canvas, 39½" diameter

Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Saul Z. Cohen



*Study for Mural for North Central  
Bronx Hospital, New York City. 1973*

Casein on masonite, 9 x 23"

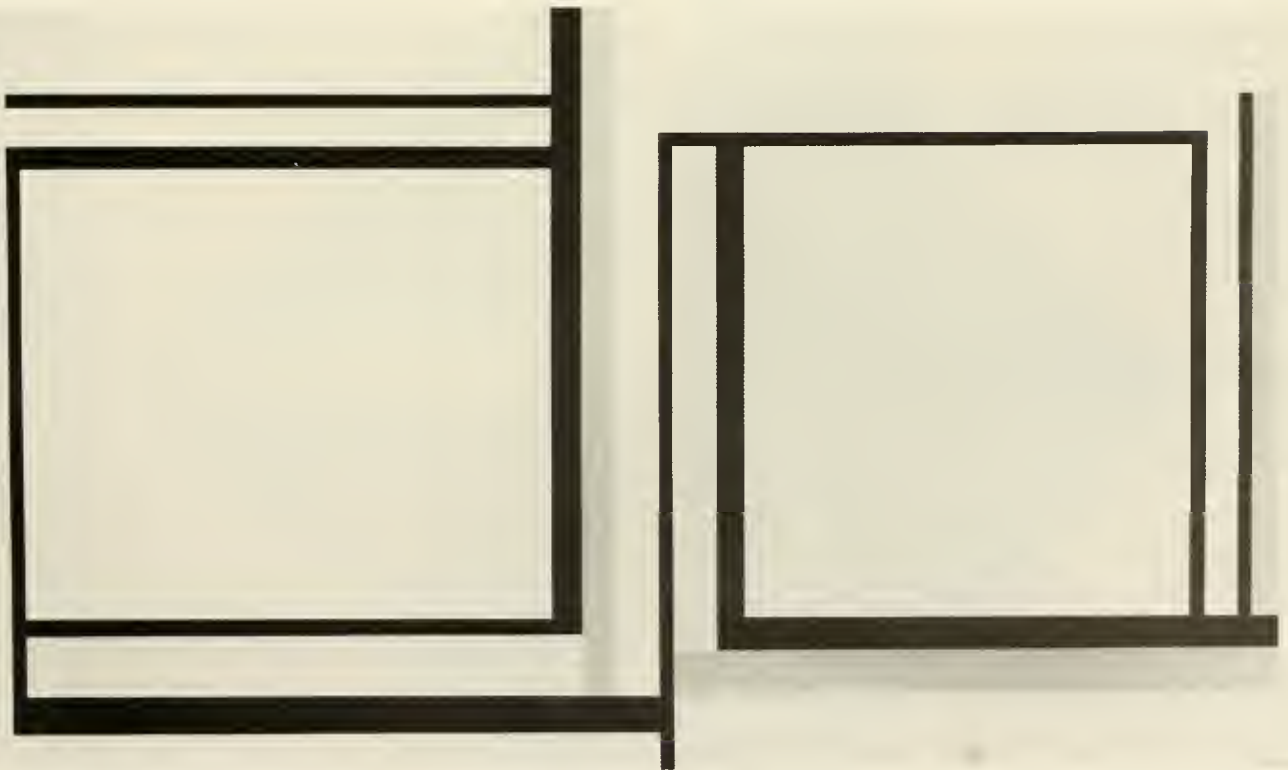
Lent by the artist



*Two White Rectangles. 1973*

Acrylic on canvas, 36 x 66"

Collection of Ciba-Geigy  
Corporation, Ardsley, New York



*Variation in Red, Diamond.* 1973

Acrylic on canvas, 62 x 62"

Collection Mr. and Mrs. Paul C.  
Schorr, III, Lincoln, Nebraska





*White Vertical with Blue, Red and  
Yellow. 1973*

Acrylic on canvas, 72 x 48"

Lent by Grace Borgenicht Gallery,  
New York



*Pale Blue Tondo with Dark  
Blue.* 1974

Acrylic on canvas, 47½" diameter

Collection Loretta and Robert  
K. Lifton

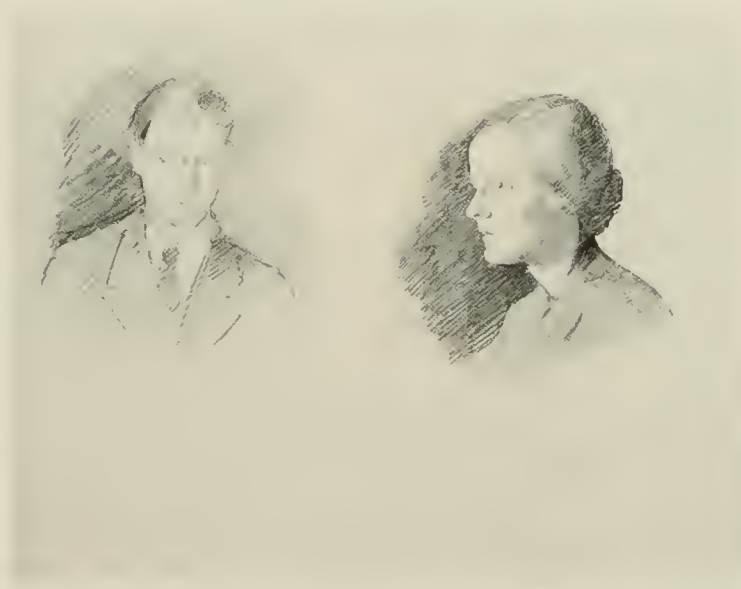


71

*Myrrha and Herbert*. c. 1924

Pencil on paper, 9 x 12"

Lent by the artist

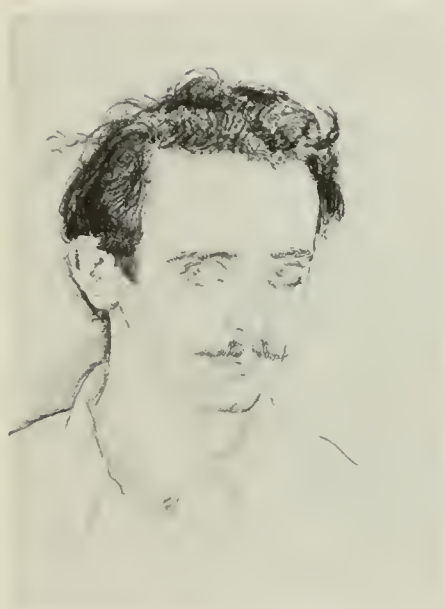


72

*Self Portrait.* 1929

Pencil on paper, 11  $\frac{1}{16}$  x 8  $\frac{1}{2}$ "

Lent by the artist



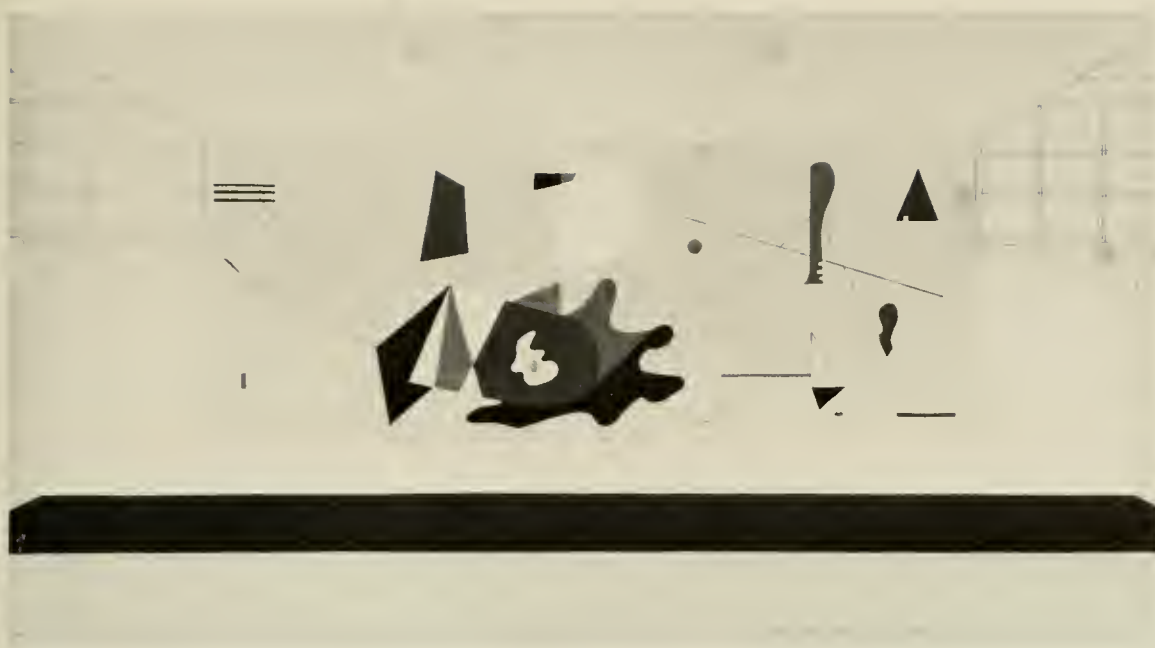
73

*Portrait of Myrrha.* 1930

Oil on paper, 14 x 9  $\frac{3}{4}$ "

Lent by the artist



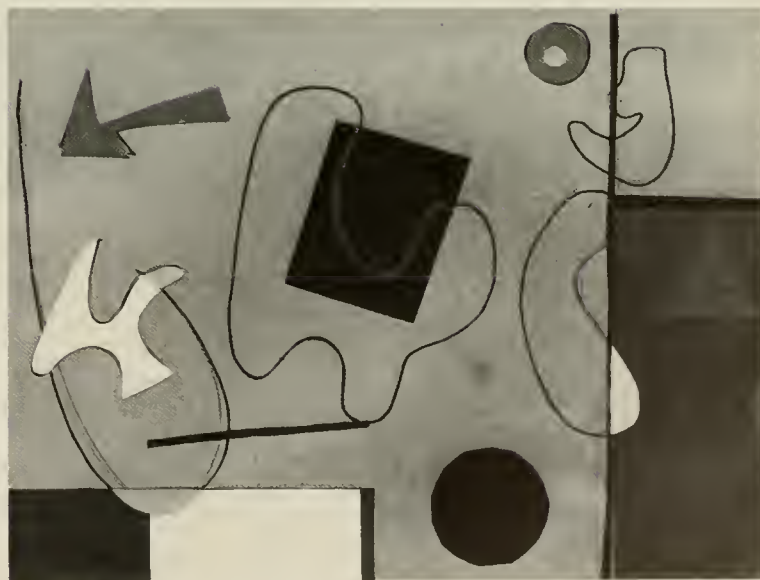


74

*Mural Sketch for Williamsburg  
Housing Project, Brooklyn,  
New York. 1936?*

Casein and ink on paper, 16½ x 30"

Lent by the artist



75

*Abstraction. 1937*

Casein, ink and collage on paper,  
9 x 11½"

Collection Mr. and Mrs. George  
L. K. Morris

*Mural Sketch for Health Building,  
Hall of Medical Science, New York  
World's Fair (First Version). 1937?*

Casein and collage on paper,  
13  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 20"

Lent by the artist



*Mural Sketch for Health Building,  
Hall of Medical Science, New York  
World's Fair (Intermediary Version).*  
1938?

Casein, ink and pencil on paper,  
10 x 22"

Lent by the artist



*Double Composition*, 1939

Gouache on paper, 3½ x 9⅞"

Private Collection, Great Neck,  
New York





*Mural Sketch for Health Building,  
Hall of Medical Science, New York  
World's Fair (Final Sketch), 1939?*

Casein on paper, 13¼ x 24¼"

Lent by the artist



*Mural Sketch for Day Room,  
Chronic Diseases Hospital, Welfare  
Island, New York. 1940?*

Casein and pencil on paper,  
15 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 29 $\frac{3}{4}$ "

Lent by the artist



*Sketch #1*. c. 1940

Gouache on paper,  $3\frac{1}{2} \times 10\frac{3}{8}$ "

Private Collection, Great Neck,  
New York



*Wounded Pilot. Alaska, 1944*

India ink on paper, 10 $\frac{1}{16}$  x 14 $\frac{1}{16}$ "

Lent by the artist



*Myrrha and Ralph. 1946*

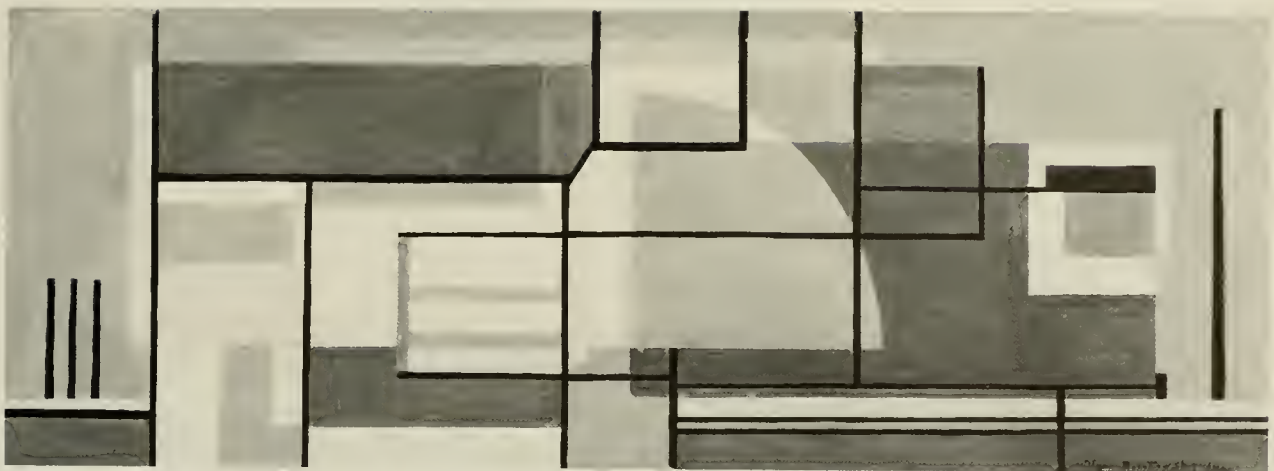
Pencil on paper, 9 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 12"

Lent by the artist

*Sketch #2. 1946*

Gouache on paper, 4 x 11  $\frac{5}{8}$ "

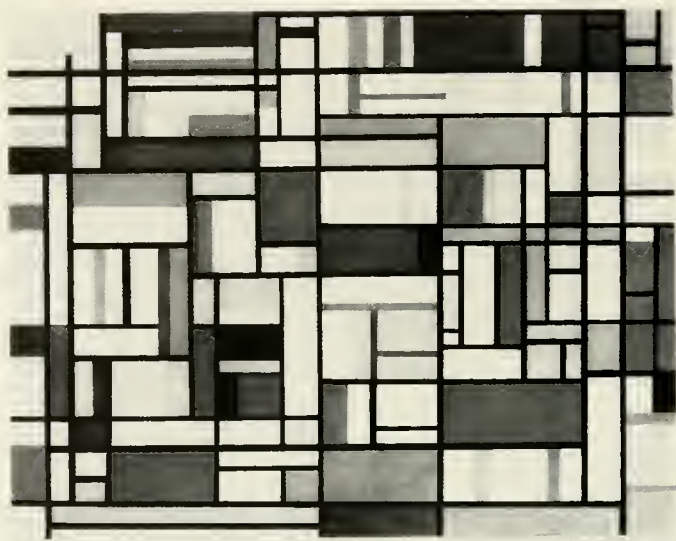
Private Collection, Great Neck,  
New York



*Untitled. 1950*

Gouache on paper, 8½ x 11"

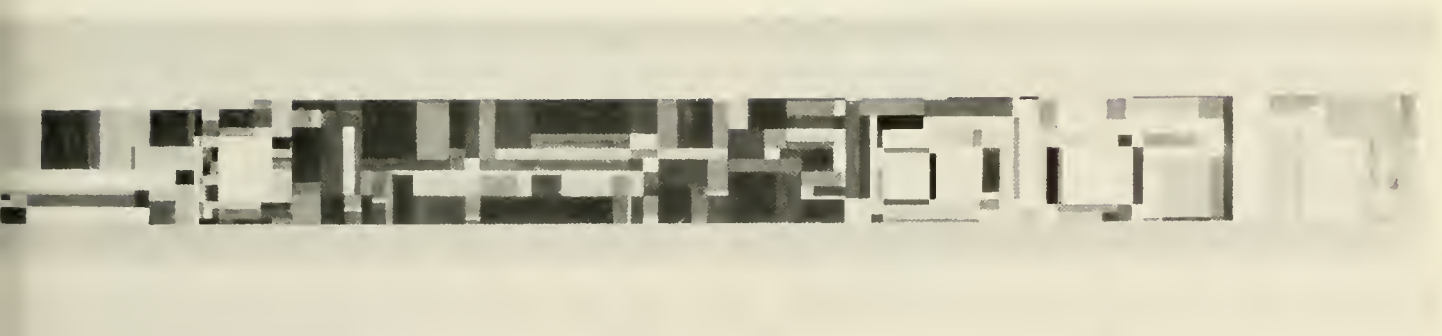
Collection Silvia Pizitz



*Mural Sketch for Cinema I Wall,  
New York. 1962*

Casein on paper, 2 x 46"

Lent by the artist



## Sculpture

*Column. 1962*

Oil on lucite, 24 x 1 x 1"

Collection J. Daniel Selig



When four measurements are given, they represent the sculpture's height followed by the width of each of its three sides.



*Aluminum Column.* 1964

Oil on aluminum, 36 x 2½ x 2½"

Collection The Aldrich Museum of  
Contemporary Art, Ridgefield,  
Connecticut

*Three Units.* 1964

Oil on wood, 15 3/16 x 5 x 4 1/8"

Collection Richard Brown Baker



*Dark Red Column.* 1966

Acrylic on wood, 48 x 8 x 8 x 8"

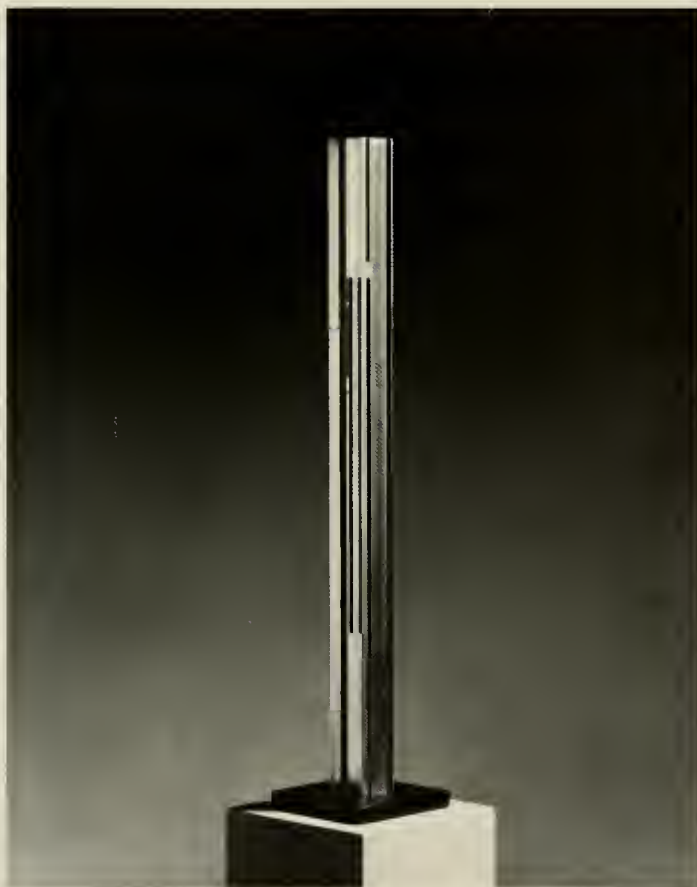
Collection Mr. E. M. Black,  
New York



*Metal Column B* 1966. 1966

Oil on aluminum, 36 x 2½ x 2½"

Collection Walker Art Center,  
Minneapolis



*Large Trylon, Red, White and  
Yellow. 1971*

Acrylic on wood, 84 x 9 x 9 x 9"

Collection The Museum Section:  
Guild Hall of East Hampton,  
New York



*Double Column, Red, Blue and Yellow. 1972*

Acrylic on wood, 36 x 14 x 5"

Lent by Grace Borgenicht Gallery,  
New York



*Trylon Eight-foot with Two Blues. 1974*

Acrylic on wood, 96 x 9 x 9 x 9"

The Joseph H. Hirshhorn Collection



## Chronology

1907

Born in Petrograd, Russia, July 1.  
Early schooling in Russia.

1921-23

Attended College of St. Joseph,  
Constantinople.

1923

To United States.

1924-30

Studied at National Academy of  
Design, New York; received their first  
prize for drawing 1925, 1926;  
their Hallgarten Prize for Painting  
1929, 1930; Louis Comfort Tiffany  
Foundation Scholarship, 1929, 1930.

1924-33

Worked in figurative,  
semi-abstract style.

1929

Became United States citizen.

1930

First one-man exhibition, New York.

1932

Traveled in Europe.

1933

Received Yaddo Foundation  
Fellowship, Saratoga Springs, New  
York. For first time saw Mondrians  
in Gallatin Collection, Mirós in  
Pierre Matisse Gallery exhibition:  
extremely important experiences for  
him. First abstract work; main  
influences on his early abstraction  
were Miró and Suprematism.

mid 1930's

Member of *The Ten*, artists' group  
which included Rothko, Gottlieb  
and others. From now until the end  
of the 30's, active member of WPA  
Federal Arts Project program for  
which he created numerous murals.

1936

Mural, Williamsburg Housing  
Project, New York: one of first  
abstract murals in the United States.  
Participated in American Artists'  
Congress. Co-founder and charter  
member American Abstract Artists:  
subsequently participated in their  
annual exhibitions.

1939

Mural, Hall of Medical Science,  
World's Fair, New York.  
Co-founder Federation of Modern  
Painters and Sculptors.

1941

Received grant from The Museum of Non-Objective Painting, New York. Mural, Chronic Diseases Hospital, New York; mosaic mural, Theodore Roosevelt High School, New York.

1942

Military service in Alaska; began collection of North West Coast Indian and Eskimo art.

mid 1940's

Influence of Mondrian on his work became more pronounced; emergence of his Neo-Plastic style.

1946

Two murals, Phillips Steel Co., Pittsburgh.

1946-48

Acting Head of Art Department, Black Mountain College, Black Mountain, North Carolina.

1948-57

Associate Professor of Art, University of Wyoming, Laramie.

1953-54

University of Wyoming Graduate School grant for experimental film work.

1954-56

Adjunct Professor, Brooklyn College, New York.

1954

First of recurring one-man exhibitions at Grace Borgenicht Gallery, New York.

1957-65

Professor of Art, State Teachers' College, New Paltz, New York.

1959

First prize for painting, Sharon Creative Arts Foundation, Connecticut.

1961

Began painted columns.

1963

Mural, Cinema I, New York. First prize for *Metanoia*, Midwest Film Festival, University of Chicago.

1963-64

Adjunct Professor of Art, Hunter College, New York.

1965-71

Professor of Art, University of Wisconsin, Whitewater.

1968

Mural, Southampton College, New York.

1969

Visiting Professor of Art, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque.

1970

Series of six lectures, Graduate School of Fine Arts, Columbia University, New York.

1971

National Institute of Arts and Letters prize for abstract painting.

1973

Adjunct Professor, graduate honors course, Queens College, New York. Mural, North Central Bronx Hospital, New York. John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Grant.

## Selected Group Exhibitions

G.R.D. Studios, New York, Fall 1929

Fine Arts Gallery, New York,  
*National Academy of Design, Fall Exhibition, 1929*

Christodora House, New York,  
exhibition organized by the New  
York Regional Council of The Art  
Center, Inc., New York, December  
1929

Art Association of Harrisburg,  
Pennsylvania, exhibition organized  
by The Art Center, Inc., New York,  
January 1930

American Art Association, Anderson  
Galleries, Inc., New York, *Louis  
Comfort Tiffany Foundation  
Eleventh Exhibition*, November  
5-22, 1930  
Checklist

Municipal Art Committee Gallery,  
New York, January 1936

Museum of Modern Art, New York,  
*New Horizons in American Art*,  
September 14-October 12, 1936  
Catalogue with introduction by  
Holger Cahill

Galerie Bonaparte, Paris, *Exposition  
"The Ten,"* November 10-24, 1936  
Checklist with foreword

Montross Gallery, New York, *Second  
Annual Exhibition "The Ten,"*  
December 14, 1936-January 2, 1937  
Announcement and checklist

John Wanamaker Gallery, New  
York, *2nd Annual Membership  
Exhibition, American Artists  
Congress*, May 5-21, 1938  
Catalogue with preface by Stuart  
Davis, note by Victor Cardell

Georgette Passedoit Gallery, New  
York, *The Ten*, May 9-21, 1938

Wildenstein and Co., Inc., Galleries,  
New York, *Second Annual Federation  
of Modern Painters and Sculptors*,  
May 21-June 10, 1942  
Catalogue with foreword

Portraits, Inc., New York, *As We See  
Them, Federation of Modern  
Painters and Sculptors*, October-  
November 3, 1943

Museum of Non-Objective Painting,  
New York, *American Non-  
Objectives*, November 1, 1942-  
January 30, 1943  
Checklist

Philadelphia Museum of Art, *Eight  
by Eight, American Abstract Painting  
Since 1940*, March 7-April 1, 1945  
Catalogue with foreword by George  
L.K. Morris



Museum of Non-Objective Painting,  
New York, *Loan Exhibition*, opened  
June 6, 1945

Checklist

The Pinacotheca, New York, *Abstract  
Group*, March-April 1946

American-British Art Center, New  
York, *10th Annual Exhibition,  
American Abstract Artists*, March  
25-April 13, 1946

Announcement

Museum of Non-Objective Painting,  
New York, *Loan Exhibition*, June  
5-October 14, 1946

Checklist

Wildenstein and Co., Inc., Galleries,  
New York, *Sixth Annual Exhibition  
of Paintings and Sculpture by  
Members of The Federation of  
Modern Painters and Sculptors, and  
Guest Artists*, September 18-October  
5, 1946

Catalogue

Carnegie Institute, Department of  
Fine Arts, Pittsburgh, *Painting in the  
United States—1946*, October 10-  
December 8, 1946

Catalogue

The Pinacotheca Gallery, New York,  
*The White Plane*, March 19-April  
12, 1947

Checklist

Kunsthaus Zurich, Solomon R.  
Guggenheim Foundation,  
*Zeitgenössische Kunst und  
Kunstpflege in U.S.A.*, October 15-  
December 15, 1947; shown at  
Karlsruhe, Kunsthalle (as  
*Gegenstandlose Malerie in  
Amerika*), March 18-April 18, 1948;  
Munich, Kunstrunde, May-June;  
Mannheim, Städtische Kunsthalle,  
July; Frankfurt am Main,  
Kunstkabinett, August-September;  
Kassel, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen,  
October; Braunschweig, Galerie Otto  
Ralfs, November; Hamburg,  
Kunstrunde, December, Hanover,  
Landesmuseum, January 1949;  
Dusseldorf, Kunsthalle, 1949; Essen,  
1949; Karlsruhe, Kunsthalle, July;  
Bremerhaven, Firma Nordkunst,  
November 19-December 25; Munich,  
Amerika-Haus, 1950; Bremerhaven,  
Amerika-Haus, June-August;  
Hamburg, Amerika-Haus, September;  
Bremen, Amerika-Haus, October;  
Hamburg, Amerika-Haus,  
November; Braunschweig, Amerika-  
Haus, December

Catalogue with preface by W.  
Wartmann, introduction by Hilla  
von Rebay

Museum of Non-Objective Painting,  
New York, *Loan Exhibition*, October  
15-December 30, 1947

The Art Institute of Chicago,  
*Abstract and Surrealist American  
Art*, November 6, 1947-January  
11, 1948

Catalogue with foreword by Daniel  
Catton Rich, notes by Frederick A.  
Sweet and Katherine Kuh

Paris, *Réalités nouvelles no. 1*, 1947  
Catalogue with foreword by A.  
Frédo Sidès

Chinese Gallery Ltd., New York,  
*1948 Annual American Abstract  
Artists*, May 29-June 18, 1948

Checklist

Palais de Beaux-Arts de la Ville de  
Paris, *Réalités nouvelles no. 2*, July  
23-August 17, 1948

Catalogue with foreword by A.  
Frédo Sidès

Wildenstein and Co. Gallery, New  
York, *The American Federation of  
Painters and Sculptors*, to October  
2, 1948

Museum of Non-Objective Painting,  
New York, *New Exhibition—  
American Non-Objective Painters*,  
February 22-May 29, 1949

Checklist

Riverside Museum, New York, *13th Annual Exhibition, American Abstract Artists*, March 29-April 17, 1949

Announcement

Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, *Post-Mondrian Painters*, 1949, May 16-June 11, 1949

Announcement

Museum of Non-Objective Painting, New York, *Loan Exhibition*, October 11, 1949-February 15, 1950

National Arts Gallery, New York, *Federation of Modern Painters and Sculptors*, 1949

New School for Social Research, New York, *14th Exhibition, American Abstract Artists*, March 15-31, 1950

Announcement

Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris, *American Abstract Artists*, June 1-July 15, 1950

The Pinacotheca—Rose Fried Gallery, New York, *American Abstract Artists, 15th Annual Exhibition*, October 10-28, 1950

Announcement

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, *1950 Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting*, November 10-December 31, 1950

Catalogue with foreword by Hermon More

New School for Social Research, New York, *The Federation of Modern Painters and Sculptors*, November 14-December 4, 1950

Checklist

Riverside Museum, New York, *American Abstract Artists Annual*, March 4-25, 1951

Museum of Non-Objective Painting, New York, *Loan Exhibition*, April 3-June 3, 1951

Announcement and checklist

New Gallery, New York, *American Abstract Artists Sixteenth Annual Exhibition*, February 24-March 13, 1952

Announcement

Museum of Non-Objective Painting, New York, *The Evolution to Non-Objectivity*, April 29-August 31, 1952

Announcement and checklist

Grace Borgenicht Gallery, New York, *52/53 Prospectus*, September 8-27, 1952

Announcement

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, *1952 Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting*, November 6, 1952-January 4, 1953

Catalogue with foreword by Hermon More

Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, *The Classic Tradition in Contemporary Art*, April 24-June 28, 1953

Catalogue with introduction by H. H. Arnason

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, *1953 Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting*, October 15-December 6, 1953

Catalogue with foreword by Hermon More

Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, Utica, New York, *Formal Organization in Modern Painting*, November 1-29, 1953

Catalogue with introduction by Harris K. Prior

Riverside Museum, New York, *13th Annual Exhibition, Federation of Modern Painters and Sculptors*, January 10-31, 1954

Announcement

The Stable Gallery, New York *Second Annual Salon*, January 24-February 20, 1954

University Galleries, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, *Nebraska Art Association Sixty-fourth Annual Exhibition*, February 28-March 28, 1954

Catalogue

Riverside Museum, New York, *American Abstract Artists*, March 7-28, 1954

Carnegie Institute, Department of Fine Arts, Pittsburgh, *Contemporary American Painting*, April 1954

Associated American Artists Gallery, New York, *14th Annual Exhibition, Federation of Modern Painters and Sculptors 1955-1956: Paintings*, February 14-26, 1955

Announcement and catalogue with introduction by Harold Weston, foreword by Duncan Phillips

University Galleries, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, *Nebraska Art Association Sixty-fifth Annual Exhibition*, February 27-March 27, 1955; shown at Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, April 10-May 10, 1955

Catalogue with introductions by Norman A. Geske and Eugene Kingman

New School for Social Research, New York, *Nineteenth Annual Exhibition, American Abstract Artists*, February 28-March 21, 1955

Announcement

The Stable Gallery, New York, *Stable Show, Fourth Annual Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture*, April 26-May 21, 1955

Announcement

Riverside Museum, New York, *15th Annual Exhibition, Federation of Modern Painters and Sculptors, Inc.*, November 13-December 4, 1955

Announcement

Riverside Museum, New York, *American Abstract Artists with "Painters 11" of Canada*, April 8-May 20, 1956

Announcement

Riverside Museum, New York, *16th Annual Exhibition, Federation of Modern Painters and Sculptors*, November 4-25, 1956

Announcement

Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, *The Sphere of Mondrian*, February 27-March 24, 1957

Catalogue with foreword by Mrs. Robert Straus and Jermayne MacAgy, introduction by Rose Fried

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, *1957 Annual Exhibition, Sculpture, Paintings, Watercolors*, November 20, 1957-January 12, 1958

Catalogue

United States Committee of the International Association of Plastic Arts, New York, organizer, 75 *Living American Artists*, traveled to Munich, Bonn, Lille, Marseilles, Paris, Tours, Toulouse and Rouen until November 1957

Riverside Museum, New York, *American Abstract Artists, 22nd Annual Exhibition, Including Guest Artists*, March 2-30, 1958

Announcement

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, *American Painting 1958*, March 28-April 27, 1958

Catalogue with foreword by Leslie Cheek, Jr., introduction by Grace L. McCann Morley

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, *The Museum and Its Friends*, April 30-June 15, 1958

Catalogue with foreword by Flora Whitney Miller, introduction by David M. Solinger

Riverside Museum, New York, *18th Annual Exhibition, Federation of Modern Painters and Sculptors, Part II*, March 29-April 26, 1959

Announcement

Betty Parsons Gallery, New York,  
*23rd Annual American Abstract  
Artists*, June 1-13, 1959  
Announcement

Whitney Museum of American Art,  
New York, *Annual Exhibition,  
Contemporary American Painting*,  
December 9, 1959-January 31, 1960  
Catalogue

University of Nebraska Art Galleries,  
Lincoln, *Seventieth Annual Exhibi-  
tion*, February 28-March 27, 1960  
Catalogue

Riverside Museum, New York, *20th  
Anniversary, Federation of Modern  
Painters and Sculptors*, October  
30-November 27, 1960

The Art Institute of Chicago, *64th  
American Exhibition, Paintings,  
Sculpture*, January 6-February  
5, 1961

Catalogue with foreword by J [ohn]  
M [axon]

Lever House, New York, *25th  
Annual Exhibition, American  
Abstract Artists*, April 3-21, 1961  
Announcement

Grace Borgenicht Gallery, New York,  
*1951-1961 Tenth Anniversary  
Season, 61-62 Prospectus*, September  
12-30, 1961  
Announcement

Riverside Museum, New York, *21st  
Annual Federation of Modern  
Painters and Sculptors*, November  
12-December 10, 1961  
Announcement

Whitney Museum of American Art,  
New York, *Annual Exhibition 1961,  
Contemporary American Painting*,  
December 13, 1961-February 4, 1962

The Pennsylvania Academy of Fine  
Arts, Philadelphia, *The One Hundred  
and Fifty-Seventh Annual Exhibition  
of American Painting and Sculpture*,  
January 12-February 25, 1962

Catalogue with foreword by Joseph  
T. Fraser, Jr.

I.B.M. Gallery, New York, *American  
Abstract Artists 26th Annual  
Exhibition*, February 5-24, 1962  
Announcement

Whitney Museum of American Art,  
*Geometric Abstraction in America,  
Fifth Loan Exhibition, Friends of  
the Whitney Museum of American  
Art*, March 20-May 13, 1962

Catalogue with foreword by Eloise  
Spaeth, introduction by John  
Gordon

Seattle World's Fair, 1962, *American  
Art Since 1950*, April 21-October 21,  
1962. Shown at Poses Institute of  
Fine Arts, Brandeis University and  
Institute of Contemporary Art,  
Boston, November 21-December  
23, 1962

Catalogue with introduction by  
Sam Hunter

Lever House, New York, *22nd  
Annual Exhibition, Federation of  
Modern Painters and Sculptors*,  
January 13-27, 1963  
Catalogue

The Corcoran Gallery of Art,  
Washington, D.C., *Twenty-Eighth  
Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary  
American Painting*, January 18-  
March 3, 1963

Catalogue with introduction by  
Hermann Warner Williams, Jr.

Grace Borgenicht Gallery, New  
York, *63-64 Prospectus*, September  
10-28, 1963  
Announcement

Whitney Museum of American Art,  
New York, *Annual Exhibition, 1963,  
Contemporary American Painting*,  
December 11, 1963-February 2, 1964  
Catalogue

Lever House, New York, 23rd  
*Annual Federation of Modern  
Painters and Sculptors*, January  
12-26, 1964

Announcement

The Pennsylvania Academy of Fine  
Arts, Philadelphia, *The One-Hundred  
and Fifty-Ninth Annual Exhibition  
of American Painting and Sculpture*,  
January 15-March 1, 1964

Catalogue with foreword by Joseph  
T. Fraser, Jr.

Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, *The  
Classic Spirit in 20th Century Art*,  
February 4-29, 1964

University Galleries, University of  
Nebraska, Lincoln, *Nebraska Art  
Association Sixty-fourth Annual  
Exhibition*, February 28-March  
28, 1964

Catalogue

Riverside Museum, New York,  
*Federation of Modern Painters and  
Sculptors*, May 3-August 2, 1964

Announcement

Galleria del Levante, Milan, Rome,  
*Il contributo russo alle avanguardie  
plastistiche*, September 1964

Catalogue

Grace Borgenicht Gallery, New  
York, 64-65 *Prospectus*, September  
15-26, 1964

Announcement

Tenth Street Galleries, New York,  
*3rd Annual Art Show*, September  
18-October 8, 1964

Announcement

Pavillion of Fine Arts, New York  
World's Fair, 1964-65, *American Art  
Today*

Catalogue with foreword by Norman  
E. Blankman

Lever House, New York, 24th  
*Annual Exhibition, Federation of  
Modern Painters and Sculptors*,  
January 10-24, 1965

Announcement

Grace Borgenicht Gallery, New York  
*The Precise Construction*, March  
2-27, 1965

Announcement

Riverside Museum, New York, 29th  
*Annual Exhibition of Members and  
Guests, American Abstract Artists*,  
March 14-April 25, 1965

Announcement

Americana Hotel, New York,  
American Institute of Architects  
Convention, *Murals in Architecture*,  
June 1965

Catalogue with introduction by  
Helen Treadwell

Grace Borgenicht Gallery, New York,  
*Prospectus 65-66*, October 5-23, 1965  
Announcement

DeCordova Museum, Lincoln,  
Massachusetts, *White on White*,  
October 10-November 21, 1965.  
Shown at Addison Gallery, Phillips  
Andover Academy, Andover,  
Massachusetts

Catalogue with foreword by  
Frederick P. Walkey

Exhibition Hall, U.S. Plywood  
Corporation Building, New York,  
*Architecture and the Arts Awards  
1965*, October 18-November 5, 1965  
Catalogue

Whitney Museum of American Art,  
New York, 1965 *Annual Exhibition  
of Contemporary American Painting*,  
December 8, 1965-January 30, 1966  
Catalogue

Union Carbide Corporation, New  
York, 25th *Annual Exhibition,  
Federation of Modern Painters and  
Sculptors*, January 11-February 1,  
1966

Announcement



The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, *One Hundred and Sixty-first Annual Exhibition of American Painting and Sculpture*, January 21-March 6, 1966

Announcement and catalogue with foreword by Joseph T. Fraser, Jr.

Grace Borgenicht Gallery, New York, *Prospectus 66-67*, September 13-24, 1966

Announcement

Riverside Museum, New York, *Yesterday and Today, American Abstract Artists' 30th Annual Exhibition*, September 25-November 27, 1966

Announcement and checklist

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, *Annual Exhibition 1966, Sculpture and Prints*, December 16, 1966-February 5, 1967

Catalogue

Grace Borgenicht Gallery, New York, *On Paper*, May 31-June 30, 1967

Announcement

Grace Borgenicht Gallery, New York, *Prospectus 67-68*, September 12-30, 1967

Announcement

The American Federation of Arts, New York, organizer *From Synchronism Forward: A View of Abstract Art in America*, traveled November 1967-November 1968

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, *1967 Annual Exhibition of Contemporary Painting*, December 13, 1967-February 4, 1968

Catalogue

Riverside Museum, New York, *The Federation of Modern Painters and Sculptors, 27th Annual Exhibition*, January 14-February 18, 1968

Checklist

Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, *Plus By Minus: Today's Half Century*, March 3-April 14, 1968

Catalogue with note by D [ouglas] M [acAgy], foreword by Gordon M. Smith

Union Carbide Building, New York, *Federation of Modern Painters and Sculptors, Members Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture*, September 16-October 11, 1968

Announcement

Riverside Museum, New York, *American Abstract Artists 32nd Anniversary Exhibition*, October 6-December 1, 1968

Announcement

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, *The 1930's: Painting & Sculpture in America*, October 15-December 1, 1968

Catalogue with text by William C. Agee

The Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, Florida, *Color in Control*, September 21-October 16, 1969, traveled to The Loch Haven Art Center, Orlando, Florida, November 2-30, 1969

Catalogue with introduction by Lee Malone

The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, *Selections from The Guggenheim Museum Collection: 1900-1970*, May 1-September 12, 1970

Catalogue with preface by Thomas M. Messer, introduction by Louise Averill Svendsen

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, *American Painting 1970*, May 4-June 7, 1970

Catalogue with foreword by James M. Brown, introduction by Peter H. Selz

Loeb Student Center, New York University, *Federation of Modern Painters and Sculptors*, December 14, 1970-January 14, 1971

Announcement

Art Gallery and Museum, The American Academy of Arts and Letters and The National Institute of Arts and Letters, New York, *Exhibition of Work by Newly Elected Members and Recipients of Honors and Awards*, May 27-June 20, 1971

#### Checklist

Galerie Jean Chauvelin, Paris, *The Non-Objective World; La Peinture non-objective; Il Mondo della Non-Oggettività*, 1924-1939, June 1-30, 1971; Annely Juda Fine Art, London, July 7-September 30, 1971; Galleria Milano, Milan, October 15-November 15, 1971

Catalogue in English, French, Italian with introduction by Eckhard Neumann

The Hudson River Museum, Yonkers, New York, *20th Century Painting and Sculpture from the New York University Art Collection*, October 2-November 14, 1971

Catalogue with acknowledgements by Ruth Bowman, foreword by Howard Conant, introduction by Irving H. Sandler

The Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield, Connecticut, *Sculpture and Shapes of the Last Decade*, October 3-December 19, 1971

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, *1972 Annual Exhibition, Contemporary American Painting*, January 25-March 19, 1972  
Catalogue with foreword by John I. H. Baur

Zabriskie Gallery, New York, *American Geometric Abstraction—1930's*, June 1-July 14, 1972  
Announcement

Annely Juda Fine Art, London, *The Non-Objective World; Die Gegenstandslose Welt; Il Mondo della Non-Oggettività*, 1939-1955, July 6-September 8, 1972; Galerie Liatowitsch, Basel, September 20-October 26, 1972; Galleria Milano, Milan, November 14-December 30, 1972

Announcement and catalogue in English, German, Italian with introduction by George Rickey

Grace Borgenicht Gallery, New York, *Prospectus 72-73*, September 9-21, 1972  
Announcement

Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, *Geometric Abstraction: 1926-1942*, October 7-November 19, 1972  
Catalogue with foreword by Merrill C. Rueppel, introduction by Robert M. Murdock, texts by Michel Seuphor and John Elderfield

Contemporary Arts Gallery, Loeb Student Center, New York University, *36th Anniversary Exhibit, American Abstract Artists*, October 31-November 22, 1972  
Announcement

Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, *Post-Mondrian Abstraction in America*, March 31-May 13, 1973  
Announcement and catalogue with foreword by Stephen S. Prokopoff, introduction by Robert Pincus-Witten

## One-man Exhibitions and Selected Reviews

G.R.D. Studios, New York, 1930

New Art Circle, J. B. Neumann, New  
York, February 11-28, 1946  
Announcement

W [olf], B [en], "Ilya Bolotowsky,  
Non-Objective," *Art Digest*, vol. 20,  
no. 10, February 15, 1946, p. 14.

The Pinacotheca, New York,  
November 10-29, 1947  
Announcement

L., A., *Art Digest*, vol. 22, no. 5,  
December 1, 1947, p. 22.  
*Art News*, vol. 46, no. 9, December  
1947, p. 46.

The Rose Fried Gallery (The  
Pinacotheca), New York, April 4-21,  
1950  
Announcement

H [ess], T [homas] B., *Art News*, vol.  
49, no. 3, May 1950, pp. 51-52.

Krasne, Belle, "Bolotowsky,  
Mondrian in Russian Translation,"  
*Art Digest*, vol. 24, no. 14, April 15,  
1950, p. 16.

New Art Circle, J. B. Neumann, New  
York, March 3-29, 1952  
Announcement with note by George  
L. K. Morris

A [shton], D [ore], *Art Digest*, vol. 26,  
no. 12, March 15, 1952, p. 19.

G [oodnough], R [obert], *Art News*,  
vol. 51, no. 1, March 1952, p. 46.

Grace Borgenicht Gallery, New York,  
January 4-23, 1954  
Announcement

L [ansner], K [ermit] L., *Art News*,  
vol. 52, no. 9, January 1954, p. 79.

S [awin], M [artica], *Art Digest*, vol.  
28, no. 7, January 1, 1954, p. 19.

Grace Borgenicht Gallery, New York,  
January 3-21, 1956  
Announcement

G., B., *Arts*, vol. 30, no. 4, January  
1956, p. 50.

T [yler], P [arker], *Art News*, vol. 54,  
no. 9, January 1956, p. 51.

Grace Borgenicht Gallery, New York,  
January 6-25, 1958  
Announcement

B [urrey], S [uzanne], *Arts*, vol. 32,  
no. 4, January 1958, p. 56.

S [chuyler], J [ames], *Art News*, vol.  
56, no. 9, January 1958, p. 21.

Grace Borgenicht Gallery, New York,  
*Recent Paintings*, October 6-24, 1959  
Announcement

D., G., *Arts Magazine*, vol. 34, no. 2,  
November 1959, p. 68.

State University College of  
Education, New Paltz, New York,  
January 10-28, 1960  
Announcement



Grace Borgenicht Gallery, New York,  
October 3-21, 1961  
Announcement

S [chuyler], J [ames], *Art News*, vol.  
60, no. 7, November 1961, p. 16.

Grace Borgenicht Gallery, New York,  
October 1-26, 1963  
Announcement

B [eck], J [ames] H., *Art News*, vol.  
62, no. 7, November 1963, p. 15.

J [udd], D [onald], *Arts Magazine*,  
vol. 38, no. 2, November 1963, p. 35.

Art Depot Gallery, La Grangeville,  
New York, August 6-16, 1964

Grace Borgenicht Gallery, New York,  
January 4-22, 1966  
Announcement

Benedikt, Michael, "New York  
Letter: Op; Neo-Neo-Plasticism,"  
*Art International*, vol. 10, no. 3,  
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S [wain], R [ichard], *Arts Magazine*,  
vol. 40, no. 5, March 1966, pp. 61-62.

East Hampton Gallery, East  
Hampton, New York, July 1966

Gorham State College Art Gallery,  
Gorham, Maine, April 15-May 15,  
1967  
Announcement

Grace Borgenicht Gallery, New York,  
March 16-April 5, 1968  
Announcement

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George Gershwin College, Stony  
Brook, New York, *Bolotowsky  
Weekend*, November 15-17, 1968

Grace Borgenicht Gallery, New York,  
January 31-February 26, 1970  
Announcement

Campbell, Lawrence, "Squaring the  
Circle and Vice-Versa," *Art News*,  
February 1970, cited above in *On  
the artist*

University Art Museum, The  
University of New Mexico, organizer,  
*Ilya Bolotowsky Paintings and  
Columns*, shown at Newport Harbor  
Art Museum, Balboa, California,  
January 27-March 1, 1970;  
University of Colorado, Boulder,  
March 22-April 26; University Art  
Museum, The University of New  
Mexico, Albuquerque, Summer; The  
University of Iowa Museum of Art,  
Iowa City, August 4-September 15  
Catalogue with text by Robert M.  
Ellis

Stiles, Knute, "A Twelve Year  
Retrospective Travels the West,"  
*Artforum*, vol. 8, no. 8, April 1970,  
pp. 52-55.

Art Harris Gallery, Los Angeles,  
June 1970

London Arts Gallery, London,  
*Paintings and Screenprints*, April 1-  
May 1, 1971  
Announcement

Grace Borgenicht Gallery, New York,  
*Recent Paintings and Columns*,  
February 26-March 23, 1972  
Announcement with note by the artist

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vol. 16, no. 4, April 20, 1972, p. 31.

Shirey, David L., *The New York  
Times*, March 4, 1972, p. 23.

David Barnett Gallery, Milwaukee,  
*Recent Paintings and Columns*,  
October 15-31, 1972  
Announcement with notes by the  
artist and David Barnett

Wichita Art Museum, Kansas, *Recent  
Serigraphs*, January 19-February 20,  
1973  
Checklist with introduction;  
statement by the artist

Grace Borgenicht Gallery, New York,  
*Paintings and Columns*, March 30-  
April 25, 1974  
Catalogue with note by J. D. Cohn;  
statement by the artist

Hess, Thomas B., *New York*, vol. 7,  
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Exhibition catalogues and selected reviews are included in the exhibitions list.

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#### *Films*

Various dates: *Bolotowsky Shows*  
1953-57: early shorts; western shorts  
1953: *David Smith*

1954: *Haunted House*

1955: *Broadway* (color); *Constant*; *Dead End* (color); *Gabo*; *Highways*; *George L. K. Morris*; *The Museum of Modern Art*; *The National Gallery*; *The Philadelphia Museum*; *Xceron*

1956: *Ruth Asawa*; *Avery*; *Nell Blaine*; *Rhys Caparn*; *De Rivera*; *Duchamp*; *Fire Escapes*; *Wolf Kahn* *Paints a Picture*; *Nevelson*; *David Smith*; *Knute Stiles*

1956-57: *Sand Creek*

1958: *De Rivera*; *Subways*; *Andrew Winter*

1959-60: *Narcissus in a Gothic Mood*

1961: *Positive Negative* (*Metanoia*)

1961-62: *Metanoia*

1961: *The Last Orpheus*

1967: *Waking Dream*

1968: *Afternoon of a Faun*; *The Eye*

1969: *The Ambassadors* (color); *Torreón*

1971: *The Parnassian*

#### *Plays*

1962: *Shadowcave*; *Visitation*

1964: *Prologue*; *Sixty Fifth Parallel*

1965: *Lofts*; *A Neurotic Lion*

1965-the present: *The Geese of Rome*

1967: *Banana Oil* (a happening)

1968: *Darling, Poor Darling; Sixty Miles per Hour* (with Andrew Bolotowsky)

1974: *Darling, Poor Darling* (an opera)

### Stories

1962: *A Picnic* (in Russian and English); *A Patient* (in Russian and English)

1964: *Thieves I*

1967: *Maecenas*

1969: *Pride; Thieves II*

1969-70: *Thieves III*

1970: *The Mattress*

1970-the present: *Going Home*

1971: *A Pioneer; Elger J. Toomer*

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